

Parents of the Gifted in Ontario: An Investigation of Parental Satisfaction with the  
Education of their Gifted Children

Ethna Bernat, B.A.

Department of Graduate and Undergraduate  
Studies in Education

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Education

Faculty of Education, Brock University  
St. Catharines, Ontario

© Ethna Bernat 2014

## **Abstract**

The opinions of parents in relation to the education of their gifted child were examined, with particular attention paid to their satisfaction and the type and amount of programming their child is receiving. This study employed a mixed methods research design that focused on parents' experiences with gifted education programming and their perceptions and level of satisfaction with these programs. A survey was used to gather the perceptions and opinions of parents of gifted children in Ontario. The data were quantified and used to make observations in relation to differences in parental satisfaction and to provide a more thorough understanding of the experiences of parents in Ontario in regards to the education of gifted children. Information was also gathered regarding the recommendations that parents have for the improvement of education for their gifted child. The results of the study found that parents of gifted children were satisfied with the connections their child made within a gifted placement with like-minded peers and with opportunities for their children to learn in a more individualized and in-depth manner. However, parents expressed dissatisfaction with the timing of the initial gifted identification and the lack of knowledge that teachers, in both regular and specialized classrooms, have about gifted children and the types of programming best suited to these children. The results of the study also showed parental dissatisfaction with the lack of funding allocated to gifted education programs by district school boards and the lack of involvement they were allowed with respect to the education of their child.

## **Acknowledgements**

Thank you to all the participants who took part in the study and provided me with the invaluable information I needed for this research. Thank you for providing valuable insight into the education of your child.

I would like to acknowledge the hard work of Dr. Joe Engemann, who provided me with guidance and wisdom and who was a valuable source of knowledge for my research journey. Joe, your passion for education is contagious and makes me want to change the opportunities given to gifted kids. I hope this is just the beginning of what we can do to give opportunities to gifted children.

Thank you to my second reader, Dr. Julian Kitchen, for providing a wealth of knowledge on gifted education and for guiding my writing in such a positive way.

To my family, many friends, and co-workers who have given me unwavering encouragement and have listened to me drone on and on about getting this research done – I appreciate you all! I especially want to thank Kimmy, Hannelore, Marion, Adrienne, and Beth for listening, giving feedback, and always being interested.

To my Mom and Dad for always knowing what I need, for being my first (and best!) teachers and my greatest cheerleaders. Your encouragement, support, and love have always allowed me to pursue my dreams. I love you both so much!

To Evan and Gwen, thank you for being the inspiration for this research. You both amaze me in ways I cannot even describe. Never be afraid to let your light shine. You are both wonderful and gifted individuals with so much to offer the world. I love you!

To Clark, what can I say, without you this would not have been possible at all. Thank you for picking up the slack and giving me the time and space to get this accomplished. Thank you for listening, editing, giving feedback, and, most of all, pushing me on when I really did not think I could keep going! Your love and support mean the world to me.

## Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
List of Tables	vii
List of Figures	viii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	1
Background of the Problem	2
Statement of the Problem Context	3
My Story	4
Purpose of the Study	6
Research Questions	7
Rationale	7
Scope and Limitations of the Study	8
Outline of the Remainder of the Document	9
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	11
Perspectives of Intelligence	11
Defining Giftedness	13
Common Traits of the Gifted	15
Heritability of Giftedness	16
Identification of the Gifted	18
Ministry Perspectives and Curriculum	21
Standards of Practice	24
Parents of the Gifted	27
Chapter Summary	32
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	33
Research Methodology and Design	33
Selection of Site and Participants	34
Instrumentation	36
Data Collection	38
Data Analysis	38
Limitations of the Study	39
Establishing Credibility	40
Methodological Assumptions	40
Ethical Considerations	41
Restatement of Purpose	42
CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS	43
Identification Process	44
Teacher Knowledge	47

Availability of Resources	49
Parental Involvement	52
School Board Understanding	54
Overall Satisfaction	56
Chapter Summary	56
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, DISCUSSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS</b>	<b>59</b>
Summary	59
Discussion	60
Implications	65
Final Words	70
References	72
Appendix A: Types of Gifted Programs Offered	79
Appendix B: Identification Process for Determining Giftedness	80
Appendix C: Online Survey	81

## List of Tables

Tables	Page
1. Levels of Parental Satisfaction with the Content being Taught and the Knowledge of the Teacher Within Their Child’s Gifted Education Placement .....	48
2. Levels of Parental Satisfaction with the Availability of Resources for Gifted Education .....	50
3. Rates of Parental Satisfaction with Their Involvement in Their Child’s Gifted Placement .....	53
4. Parental Satisfaction with the Understanding of School Boards to Accommodate for Their Gifted Child .....	55
5. Parents Overall Satisfaction with Their Child’s Gifted Placement ....	57

## List of Figures

Figures		Page
1.	Person who initiated identification of child as gifted learner.....	46



## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study was to explore the opinions that parents have about the education that their gifted children are receiving and to determine the changes, if any, that these parents feel need to be made to improve their child's education. My interest in this topic stems from both my own experience as a gifted student and my experience as a parent of a gifted child. As my son has moved through the elementary years of his education, he has been presented with limited options for a differentiated curriculum that would meet his academic needs and has experienced a great deal of frustration and dissatisfaction with the education he is receiving. Students in the Province of Ontario normally spend 14 years within the public school system. Imagine the frustration of a child who sits in a classroom knowing all the answers and understanding concepts immediately, and yet is forced to sit quietly while his peers struggle over these same concepts. Imagine that this same child, who loves learning and wants to explore more, is discouraged by his teacher and, instead, is given more of the same unchallenging work or is asked to assist his peers to understand the concepts. Imagine being unchallenged and not being encouraged to work hard, and yet still being given high academic scores. Now imagine having to do this every day, every week, every year, for the majority of your educational experience. As a parent, I have experienced this with my son since he started public school at age 3. In my interactions with parents of other gifted children, my experience does not appear to be unique. In this initial chapter, I discuss the background of the problem as it exists within the Province of Ontario, within the confines of the Ontario Ministry of Education Special Education Act (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2001). I discuss the purpose of the study, present an overview of my research questions,

and clarify my rationale for the study. I also include a discussion on the scope and limitations of the study.

### **Background of the Problem**

All students in Ontario should have the right to education that allows them to achieve to the best of their ability. Students should feel respected, challenged, and involved in their educational path. In recent years, many district school boards have been promoting the idea of differentiated learning which, in an ideal setting, would tailor teaching to suit the individual needs of each and every student within the classroom. Those students who fall at either end of the *normal* spectrum are classified as having special education requirements and may require further additional assistance than they might receive from the classroom teacher alone. This may include an educational assistant to work with the student, accommodations in the type of work given, accommodations in the environment in which the student works, and/or specific programs that cater to a specific need of the child.

As with all students who fall within the realm of special education, gifted and talented children have specific educational, social, and developmental needs. Morawska and Sanders (2009) state that if a gifted child's ability is not identified and supported appropriately, the child has a higher incidence of becoming withdrawn, demonstrating depression, or exhibiting behavioural problems. There are also long-term social impacts, such as underachievement, effects to self-esteem and motivation, and increased school dropout rates, that affect gifted children who are underserved in schools. As stated by Zabloski and Milacci (2012), as many as 20% of high school dropouts are gifted. Matthews and Smyth (2000) discuss that without appropriate intellectual challenge and

stimulation, gifted learners can experience serious learning, behavioural, and psychological problems.

Unfortunately, in some district school boards, the education of gifted children is not a priority. There is an assumption that gifted children have the intelligence to independently supplement their own education and gain the knowledge they crave through their own initiative. However, more often than not, gifted children remain in classes where learning experiences lack challenge, stifle motivation, and create boredom. Also, some children who should be identified as being gifted, are not. This oversight may be due to inconsistencies with IQ testing or teacher reporting, or because the student does not fit the stereotype of what a “gifted” child looks like (Baudson & Preckel, 2013).

### **Statement of the Problem Context**

The context for this issue is based within the educational system of the Province of Ontario for children in Grades 1 through 12 who require gifted education. While this issue surely exists in other geographical locations, my research focused on parents with a child enrolled in district school boards within the Province of Ontario. I focused on the perspective of the parents of gifted children as opposed to the opinions of the children themselves. I explored and discovered changes, if any, that parents felt needed to be made to improve their child’s education. Parental involvement in schools is being encouraged in many district school boards. In several studies, research has shown that students who are successful tend to have families that are involved in their schooling (Epstein, 2007; Hands, 2010; Mathews, 1981). I hope the results of this research will encourage parents to feel empowered to speak up and make changes to gifted education within their own district school boards.

## **My Story**

I was an early reader. I could read full chapter books by the age of 3. I loved learning and using my imagination to create short stories and songs. When I entered school, I found that high grades came easily to me. I scored very high on most tasks that I was assigned, with very little effort. The teachers I had for the first few years would have me complete my work early and then “assist” the other students in the class. I remember from a very early age disliking being asked to do this as it set me apart from my peers. I always felt that I just wanted to fit in with the rest of the class. I quickly became bored at school and found the days tediously long. I could never quite grasp why it took so long for others to understand what I thought were very basic concepts.

I was formally identified as gifted in Grade 2. I wrote a series of IQ tests and scored out at the gifted level. I was then grouped within my regular class with two other students at a separate table at the back of the classroom. We were required to complete the same work as our peers but were given extra similar work once we were done. Our small table of three easily completed two or three times the work of our peers with very little guidance or supervision, and we became quite competitive with what each other could accomplish. In Grade 4, we were given differentiated activities in a separate class for 1 or 2 hours every week. These activities usually included science experiments, problem-solving activities, and story writing. I loved these classes. They challenged us to try something new and allowed us to think in a critical way about the tasks we were undertaking. For the first time, I was motivated to do well in these classes, despite the fact that these classes were broader in their evaluation and mattered very little to standardized report cards and grades. Between Grades 6 and 9 I received a full day of

gifted programming in the 10-day school day cycle. These classes were held within my school but involved us being segregated together to work on specific projects, to attend field trips, or to attend critical thinking or problem-solving competitions around the region with other gifted children. I still enjoyed these classes in an intellectual way, but socially I disliked being removed from my friends in the regular class and feeling different from the norm. After Grade 9, I moved with my family to a different school board that offered very little gifted programming. There were no course offerings in my new high school that had “gifted” content and the only additional activity available was an “Enrichment Club,” which essentially took field trips to museums, science centres, or sporting events. Although unmotivated to do anything but the bare minimum, I completed high school with high marks and attended university.

I had my son in 2001. He showed signs of giftedness from a very early age. He started talking at 5 months and could walk, recite the alphabet, and identify the first letter of words spoken orally to him by 10 months. By 12 months he could identify colours and shapes (including hexagon, octagon, parallelogram), and read and spell simple words. By 2 years he was reading books easily that were far above a normal reading level for his age. He not only had an amazing vocabulary and memory, but his comprehension and spelling abilities were exceptional. He loved learning. He read everything he could. By age 4 he had discovered a passion for geography and proceeded to read atlases and memorize all of the country locations, capital cities, and flags for every country in the world.

Despite these advanced abilities, when he entered school he was forced to follow the prescribed curriculum. I agreed with this decision initially while he was in

Kindergarten because I wanted to ensure the focus was on him making connections socially with his peers. However, by the end of Junior Kindergarten he started complaining about being bored at school. This has continued for many years during which time he has become increasingly more unmotivated. Despite numerous meetings with teachers, learning resource teachers, and principals to request that he be assessed, he has not been offered any opportunities for altered learning. In fact, at the majority of meetings with his teachers, we were told that there was nothing they could do, and that they were required to follow the same curriculum for all children in the class. He had not received any substantial differentiated curriculum until 2011 when he was finally formally identified as gifted in the fifth grade. Unfortunately, the school board where he attends still suffers from the same lack of offerings for gifted children as it did when I was enrolled as a student in the early 1990s. He now attends gifted classes, 1 full day out of 10 in the school cycle, which he enjoys and which offer him the opportunity to gain higher-level thinking skills with other like-minded gifted children. This program, however, while helpful, is only available to him until he reaches the end of Grade 8, at which point he will enter high school with no additional offerings or support. As a parent, it is very frustrating to perceive that the school system is failing to offer my son the education for which he was, and is, so desperately yearning.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the opinions that parents of gifted children have about their child's education and to determine whether there were any changes that they felt needed to be made to improve education for gifted children within the Province of Ontario.

## **Research Questions**

The research questions were framed to better understand the interaction parents have with the education system for their gifted child. These questions allowed for exploration in regards to parental satisfaction with mainstream educational programming and the specific gifted programming (if any) in which their child is involved. The first research question was: What are parents' opinions of the education their gifted child is receiving within a regular classroom? This question aimed to explore whether, and how, gifted children are given specific accommodation within a regular classroom and whether there was any indication of differentiated instruction by the mainstream teacher.

The second research question was: What are parents' opinions of the gifted programming available, if any, to their child within their local school board? With this question, I hoped to explore whether parents were satisfied with the type and amount of gifted programming that their gifted child receives. I had hoped that this question would show that increased programming and options need to be developed.

The final research question was: What recommendations do parents have for the improvement of gifted programming? This question aimed to focus on the improvement of the current offerings for gifted education. This question sought to uncover other options for gifted programming that are currently not in place, but which would improve the educational experience of gifted children across the province.

## **Rationale**

I argue that gifted students have been neglected for far too long. Within the school board where my son is enrolled, very little has changed in the 20 years since I was enrolled. Despite decreased funding, special education in general should be a priority in

the school system. Teachers, principals, superintendents, and local politicians need to understand that gifted children have a right to special education programming as much as any other child who requires accommodations. I would also argue that it is not acceptable for a child to sit in a classroom year after year bored, unchallenged, and unmotivated.

The results of this study may be of particular interest to special education teachers and those involved in gifted education, in order to give strength to any arguments they may be making for additional funding and/or for expansion of gifted programming. The results could also be of interest to district school boards who ultimately have the decision-making power over the type and amount of gifted programming available to students. It may also be of interest to external groups who may wish to provide supplemental gifted programming to students that is not currently offered in the public school system. Most importantly, I hope the results provide information to other parents of gifted children who may be encouraged to make changes for the betterment of the education for not only their child, but for all children who are identified as gifted learners.

### **Scope and Limitations of the Study**

Within the scope of this study, I included perspectives from parents of gifted children from several district school boards across Ontario. District school boards of different sizes with varied options of gifted education programming were included to provide a substantial comparison. In order to gain participants, I advertised my study through the email list of the Association of Bright Children. This organization, which has several chapters across Ontario, is a group for parents of gifted children. It includes



resources, discussion, publications, and events focused on gifted children. I requested participants to complete an online survey in regards to their experiences and satisfaction with gifted programming, to further gain in-depth data about the programming in which their child is involved.

One limitation of this study was the limited access to district school boards and to the parents of gifted children. By using the already established network within the Association of Bright Children, I was provided access to this specific population of parents. Another major limitation to the study was the geographical location of participants. Obtaining as wide a sample as possible was difficult due to the size of the province of Ontario, however, using an online survey assisted with this task. Finally, it was difficult to make a comparison between gifted programs, as each one is so different from the other, and they vary from being a full-time gifted program for students in Grade 1 through Grade 12, to areas which do not offer any gifted programming whatsoever, or to some amount in between.

### **Outline of the Remainder of the Document**

The remainder of this document will adhere to the following outline. Chapter Two discusses the perspectives of intelligence through the lens of psychometric, cognitive, and contextual theory. I then review the body of literature regarding the definition of giftedness, similar traits of the gifted, the heritability of intelligence, and the identification process of gifted individuals. Within this chapter, I also outline the policies of the Ontario Ministry of Education in relation to special education and gifted programming and provide a sample of standards of practice across several district school

boards across Southern Ontario. Finally, within this chapter I explore literature that relates to parents of gifted children.

Chapter Three provides a review of the methodology that was used within my study, including research design, selection of sites and participants, instrumentation, and data collection. It also explores how the data were analyzed and how I established credibility for the study. Finally, I explore any assumptions about the potential findings I discovered and discuss the ethical implications of my research.

Chapter Four includes my presentation of the findings of the study.

Lastly, Chapter Five begins with a brief summary of this study. It continues with a discussion of the research findings as they relate to the research questions that guided this study. The implications of the results and recommendations for further research are also presented within this chapter.

## **CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Chapter Two discusses the perspectives on intelligence through the lens of psychometric, cognitive, and contextual theory. This is followed by a review of the body of literature regarding the definition of giftedness, similar traits of the gifted, the heritability of intelligence, and the identification process of gifted individuals. It also explores the policies of the Ontario Ministry of Education in relation to special education and gifted programming and provides a sample of standards of practice across several district school boards across Southern Ontario. Finally, the last section of this chapter explores literature that relates to parents of gifted children.

### **Perspectives of Intelligence**

In this section, I discuss three theories of intelligence, psychometric, cognitive and contextual theory, and some key research for each, as they relate to intelligence and gifted individuals. Psychometric theory is based on the thought that intelligence is an innate, inherited, and stable trait that is continuous throughout the lifespan. As is shown in the work of Darwin, intelligence is seen as an evolutionary gain, in order to increase survival of the species (Ruse, 2006). The first standardized test for intelligence was developed by Alfred Binet, in France in 1904 as a test for identifying children who had learning disabilities. This test was then further developed into the Stanford-Binet IQ test by Louis Terman, which he used to identify individuals who were gifted to be included in his study *The Genetic Study of Genius* (Shurkin, 1992). Tests similar to the Stamford-Binet IQ test are still in use today and are used as the standard test for indentifying gifted individuals. Unfortunately, some studies, most notably, Francis Galton's pangenesis research, sought to emphasize this innate, inborn ability and, thus, create a "superior"

race of humans (Grinder, 1990). Galton coined the term *eugenics* meaning “improvement of the human race by better breeding” (as cited in Grinder, 1990).

Cognitive theory of intelligence references mental processing as a key factor in intelligence. A more intelligent person, therefore, will have a better representation of information and can mentally process information faster. This theory includes the works of Sternberg whose triarchic theory of human intelligence proposes that there are three different, yet connected, aspects to intelligence. These are analytical intelligence, which includes the mechanisms to acquire knowledge and learn new skills (i.e., book smart); creative intelligence, which explains the behaviour of an individual when they are faced with a novel task or situation; and finally, practical intelligence, which explains the adaptation of these intelligences to real world situations (i.e., street smart; Sternberg & Clinkenbeard, 1995). It is assumed that an individual who is identified as gifted will have a strong command of all three of these aspects of intelligence.

Contextual intelligence theory assumes that intelligence has a cultural context and is based upon opportunity and is, therefore, not stable across the lifespan. Howard Gardner’s multiple intelligence theory stressed the dynamics between biological and environmental factors that have influence on intelligence (Helding, 2009). His theory proposed that there are seven forms of intelligence. These include linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, spatial intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, and musical intelligence. It could be assumed that gifted individuals would show strength in one or several of these domains. As Thompson and Oehlert (2010) discuss, giftedness may be a concept that is dynamic and emergent as opposed to a static collection of traits. They argue that gifted

individuals experience maximal learning when they themselves are the initiators of their own education.

### **Defining Giftedness**

There are varied definitions of giftedness. R. J. Sternberg created a five-tiered theory of giftedness, which includes criteria an individual needs to meet to be identified as gifted (as cited in Yun Dai, 2010). First, the individual must show excellence or superiority in some criteria or set of criteria in comparison to his/her peers. Second, the individual must possess a high level of knowledge or skill in a rare criterion in comparison to his/her peers. Third, this superior criterion upon which the individual is evaluated, must potentially lead to productivity. Fourth, this superiority or excellence must be demonstrated and proven through valid assessment testing. Finally, the criteria that the individual shows excellence in must be valued by that individual or by society as a whole.

Morawska and Sanders (2009) define giftedness as the possession and use of untrained and spontaneously natural activities in at least one ability domain. Renzulli (2005) stated that giftedness consists of an interaction among three basic clusters of human traits, above-average general abilities, high levels of task commitment, and high levels of creativity, which gifted children possess and have the ability to apply to any potentially valuable area of human performance.

The National Association for Gifted Children (n.d.), an American-based association, defines gifted individuals as:

those who demonstrate outstanding levels of aptitude (defined as an exceptional ability to reason and learn) or competence (documented performance or

achievement in top 10% or rarer) in one or more domains. Domains include any structured area of activity with its own symbol system (e.g., mathematics, music, language) and/or set of sensorimotor skills (e.g., painting, dance, sports). (para.4)

What appears to be missing in these definitions is a reflection of the variation between gifted children and between the subjects or topics in which they are gifted. The definitions also do not reflect the fact that a gifted child, although strong in one or several domains, may also perform poorly in other domains and/or may have other special needs, such as learning disabilities, autism, or attention deficit disorders. It is these preconceived stereotypes of what a gifted child should look like that may prevent many gifted children from being assessed and given the appropriate education they require. This is especially true for the definition provided by the Ministry of Education of Ontario because it only discusses advanced intellectual ability but does not reflect children who may be gifted in creative domains or with affective or emotional characteristics.

A broader definition of giftedness is provided by Barbara Clark (1997), whose definition is stated as the following:

a biologically rooted concept that serves as a label for a high level of intelligence and indicates an advanced and accelerated development of functions within the brain. Such development may express itself in high levels of cognitive, affective, physical sensing, and/or intuitive abilities, such as academic aptitude, insight and innovation, creative behavior, leadership, personal and interpersonal skill, or visual and performing arts. (p. 26)

According to the Ontario Ministry of Education (2001) in the “*Standards for School Boards’ Special Education Plans*” document, giftedness is defined as “an usually

advanced degree of general intellectual ability that requires differentiated learning experiences of a depth and breadth beyond those normally provided in the regular school program to satisfy the level of educational potential indicated” (p. A20).

### **Common Traits of the Gifted**

There are several common traits that are evident in gifted children. As Ellen Winner (2000) explains:

Gifted children, those with unusually high ability in one or more domains, not only develop more rapidly than typical children, but also appear to be qualitatively different. They have an intense drive to master, require little explicit tuition, and, if intellectually gifted, often pose deep philosophical questions. (p. 162)

Some additional behavioral characteristics that gifted children may display include unusual levels of intellectual curiosity, superior judgment and reasoning ability, strong critical thinking skills, an abstract and inquiring mind, the ability to concentrate for prolonged periods of time, advanced reading ability, advanced vocabulary, a sense of humour, ability to master skills quickly, extensive memory, and strong ethics and values (Association for Bright Children, n.d. para. 1). Artistically gifted children may discover advanced compositional techniques early, tend to be self-motivated and deeply interested in honing their particular artistic skill (Drake & Winner, 2012)

Harrison and Van Haneghan (2011) studied gifted students in middle and high school and found they were more likely to suffer from insomnia and anxiety of the unknown than other students. Their findings concluded that students who scored high on Dabrowski’s psychomotor, sensual, intellectual, imaginal, and emotional

overexcitabilities scale were more likely to suffer from insomnia and anxiety. Lamont (2012) also discusses gifted individuals' tendencies towards perfectionism and depression, and having increased levels of fear. She concluded that many gifted individuals may experience fear and anxiety more often or more intensely than their nongifted peers, which may be due to asynchronous development, in that gifted individuals can cognitively understand these concepts but are not emotionally mature enough to handle them.

### **Heritability of Giftedness**

Heritability is a statistic that describes the proportion of phenotypic variance in a population that can be attributed to genetic influences (Plomin, Owen, & McGuffin, 1994). A discussion about heritability of giftedness must begin with the study of higher intelligence by Lewis Terman, *The Genetic Studies of Genius* (as cited in Shurkin, 1992). Terman developed the Stanford-Binet intelligence test which he used in his study on gifted children. This longitudinal study began in 1915, and continues today, to study the inheritance of intelligence (as cited in Shurkin, 1992). The initial study consisted of 1,444 students, with 831 boys and 613 girls, between the ages of 3 and 18 (Seagoe, 1975). The IQ scores for the children ranged between 135-200, with the average score being 151 (Seagoe, 1975). Terman classified various characteristics for these children, including parental occupation, racial origin, number of siblings, family health history, height and weight, length of gestation, onset of puberty, and nervous disturbances (Shurkin, 1992). While biased, especially in terms of race and socioeconomic class, the study yielded initial results which created a wealth of information for Terman to use as a comparison to the general population. It also provided a good benchmark to compare the



gifted children in the original study to their offspring many years later. By 1955, the participants had produced 2,452 children which Terman used for further study. He found that the average IQ for these second generation children was 132.7, 33% of which scored 140 or higher and only 2% were less than 100 (Shurkin, 1992). It is particularly noteworthy that 16% of the children of the participants that were tested were identified as gifted which is significantly higher than the 1% found in the general population (Shurkin, 1992).

Many opponents to the nature debate argue that children who are identified as gifted have been nurtured to produce higher levels of intelligence, and that their gifts are a learned skill. However, Winner (2000) states that the claim that savants achieve their high level of performance because they have practiced their skill for countless hours, does not explain the fact that gifted children show extremely high ability from an early age. She states that it seems more likely that gifted children owe their gifts to innate abilities that, in turn, reflect atypical brain organization (Winner, 2000).

Perrone, Ksianzak et al. (2010) created a study to learn about multigenerational aspects of giftedness, where participants were asked to identify their perceptions regarding giftedness in their parents and their children. The study showed 34% of participants reported that both of their parents were gifted, 14% said their mother was gifted, 14% said their father was gifted, and 1% stated they were unsure if either parent was gifted. The three most frequently cited areas where the mothers were found to be gifted were (a) creative or artistic ability, (b) language and writing, (c) and general academic ability. The three most frequent gifted areas cited for fathers were (a) math and science, (b) mechanical or spatial, and (c) general academic ability. In regards to

participants' children, 70% identified at least one of their children as gifted with the three most frequently cited areas being (a) reading and language, (b) math and science, and (c) general intelligence.

Vinkhuyzen, van der Sluis, Posthuma, and Boomsma (2009) used twin studies to compare genetic factors that may contribute to variation in aptitude and intelligence. As these twins would have similar familial environments, the study sought to prove that intelligence was genetically inherited rather than a result of environment. The study split the twins into two groups, monozygotic (identical) and dizygotic (fraternal), who were then asked to rank their competence in music, arts, writing, language, chess, mathematics, sport, memory, and knowledge. The researchers found that on all variables, correlations for identical twins exceeded fraternal twins, suggesting genetic influence.

Dickens and Flynn (2001) discuss how an individual's IQ can be influenced by the IQ of others with whom they come into contact. They call this phenomenon the *social multiplier effect* and hypothesize that improving an environment for an individual should raise IQ scores. These researchers show that in adoption studies, children's IQ scores are raised as much as 12 points when they are moved into a more stable environment. However, they also find that as these children age, their IQ scores match their adoptive family less and their biological family more, showing that environmental effects are relatively short-lived (Dickens & Flynn, 2001).

### **Identification of the Gifted**

The process for identifying children who are gifted has historically involved the use of standardized intelligence testing. The first standardized test for intelligence was developed by Alfred Binet in France in 1904 as a test for identifying children who had

learning disabilities. This test was then revised by William Stern to include a mathematical procedure to quantify an individual's Intelligence Quotient, or IQ, score (Shurkin, 1992). The most-widely used IQ test is the Stanford-Binet test, which was developed by Lewis Terman in 1915, revising and combining both Binet's and Stern's original tests. He used the test to identify children that he could use in his study of children that he declared to be "genius." He included in his study children who scored a minimum IQ of 135 on the test (Shurkin, 1992). Another popular test, which continues to be used today, is the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (Clark, 1997). Usually both of these tests (or similar tests) are administered and the two scores are combined to give the IQ score. This score is then used to compare the mental age of a child to the chronological age of the child, and then subsequently compare this score to that of their peers. The middle 50% of the population generally falls between 90 and 110 IQ. On the Stanford-Binet, a score of 132 or higher is considered the start of the top 2% of the population and on the Wechsler test the top 2% begins at a score of 131 (Clark, 1997).

These IQ tests are by all means, however, not the only method for identifying the gifted. In fact, in many cases these tests may be biased towards particular populations thereby preventing some children from being identified properly (Clark, 1997). It may be the case that students from lower socioeconomic status may not receive the same opportunities to perform well on the required IQ tests. These tests also discriminate from students who may be gifted but have other special education needs that may not allow for their success on standardized testing.

Some other methods that can be used in identifying gifted children include nomination from teachers, principals, learning resource teachers, and psychologists who

are observing the child on a regular basis. Reports from the teacher regarding the functioning of the student in intelligence, social and emotional function, learning style, motivation and physical functioning are other methods of assessment, which are frequently used. It should be noted, however, that a study by Pagnato and Birch (as cited in Clark, 1997) shows that junior high teachers are only 45% accurate in identifying children in their classrooms that are gifted, and only 26% of the children they select to be evaluated actually are identified as gifted.

According to Jacobs (1971), that accuracy drops even further as the grade level gets lower, with only 10% accuracy for Kindergarten. Conversely, the same study by Jacobs showed that parents have 76% accuracy in identifying gifted children in kindergarten classrooms. Parents obviously spend a great deal of time with their child and are, therefore, very aware of their behaviour. Parents can provide a rich historical background of the student, including developmental milestones, social/cultural background, and medical or health records, and they can also give insight into the interests and passions of the individual student. I argue that teachers need to really listen to, and take seriously, parents who think their child may be gifted and who want early identification of their child. Unfortunately, this is not the response I received when dealing with the educational system in relation to my son.

Some other methods for identifying gifted children that can yield results include using peer identification, student self-identification, analysis of the students' work and academic achievement, and observing their results on other multidimensional tests that show creative, emotional, or leadership skills (Clark, 1997). These multidimensional tests are particularly important when trying to identify a student who is gifted in musical,

artistic, entrepreneurial, performance, or leadership domains because these students may or may not excel in the other methods of testing.

### **Ministry Perspectives and Curriculum**

In 1980, some provisions concerning special education were added to the Education Act under Bill 82 (Matthews & Smyth, 2000). Although there have been slight revisions and amendments since this time, several key points remain in the Education Act (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012). The first of these key revisions stated it was the responsibility of district school boards to provide special education programs and services for their exceptional students. The second provision discusses how the special education program is based on, and modified by, continuous assessment of the student, which includes a plan and goals, and details of the initiatives that will directly assist the student in reaching those goals. The third revision that remains today includes the requirement of boards of education to establish a tribunal to provide arbitration in disagreements between parents and district school boards regarding the identification or placement of an exceptional pupil. Finally, the last key point which remains in the Education Act includes specific responsibilities for the Minister of Education to abide by, which includes; requiring district school boards to implement the early and ongoing identification of learning abilities and needs of students, defining students' exceptionalities and assigning appropriate programming for exceptional students, providing an appeal process for parents, and ensuring that special education programs and services are provided without payment of fees by district school boards to their exceptional pupils (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012).

In regards to gifted education specifically, there is not a standard practice of how to offer gifted education and how much alternate programming would have the greatest impact on the education of children. While the provincial guidelines exist, the responsibility for putting these guidelines into action is governed by district school boards and, therefore, highly variable (Matthews & Smyth, 2000). Therefore, provided district school boards are providing even the most basic additional education, they can state they are meeting the standards set out by the province. There also is not a standardized curriculum that relates to gifted education. Teachers who teach gifted children are expected to follow the Ontario Curriculum but to include high order thinking and critical thinking skills. Of course, the outcome of this is highly dependant on the skills and knowledge of the teacher who is instructing the children.

Unfortunately, as presented by Berman, Schultz, and Weber (2012), “gifted and talented learners in most classroom settings endure unchallenging curriculum, a slow pace of instruction and a state of ignorance by many of their general education teachers” (p. 19). In their research, they explored the perceptions and beliefs of pre-service teachers towards gifted and talented learners. They found two consistent themes in the beliefs of these early-career teachers; a) all children have a gift in one domain or another, and b) gifted children do not require special services because they are smart enough to “figure it out on their own.” As stated by Berman et al.:

For many teacher candidates, the GT [Gifted & Talented] children in their classrooms are viewed as nothing more than peer-tutoring candidates who are ahead of the game. They are not viewed as children being handicapped by an

unchallenging educational environment or a lack of awareness by those charged with keeping students' best interests in mind – their teachers. (p. 24)

Differentiated instruction has been promoted by the Ontario Ministry of Education (2011) in recent years. In their *Learning for All* document, they discuss the three concepts that indicate the need for differentiated instruction.

A safe and non-threatening learning environment encourages learning. Learners who experience discomfort in connection with rejection, failure, pressure, or intimidation may not feel safe in the learning context; learners must be appropriately challenged. The content of new learning should be neither too difficult nor too easy, so that learners can be comfortable enough to accept the challenge that new learning offers; and learners must be able to make meaning of new ideas and skills through significant association with elements of previous knowledge and experience. (p. 16)

In my experience, differentiated instruction, although being suggested and encouraged by the Ministry of Education, does not appear to be used consistently within mainstream classrooms. As I stated earlier in reference to the experience of my son within the education system, when we inquired about different instruction for him within his regular classroom we were told that the teacher could not stray from the standard curriculum. Several teachers suggested they would assign him extra work once he had completed his regular work but would not change the initial work that was expected for all the children in the class. As stated by Brulles and Winebrenner (2011),

gifted students are gifted every year, not only during the years when the school has a program that addresses their needs. School Administrators should establish

gifted education services as an integrated part of the regular school day for all gifted-identified students. (p. 39)

### **Standards of Practice**

To serve as a comparison, four public district school boards in Southern Ontario were explored to discover their current offerings in gifted education.

The Niagara Region has a population of 427,421 people (Statistics Canada, 2006) and the District School Board of Niagara (DSBN) serves an enrolment of over 38,000 students, and operates 95 elementary and 20 secondary schools (District School Board of Niagara, n.d.). I chose to use this school board because it is the system in which my children are currently enrolled and one in which I was enrolled in when I was in high school.

The Halton Region has a population of 439,256 people (Statistics Canada, 2006) and the Halton District School Board (HDSB) serves an enrolment of over 56,000 students and operates 83 elementary and 18 secondary schools (Halton District School Board, n.d.). I chose to review this school board because I was enrolled in schools in this board between Grades 2-9. It was within this school board where I was identified as gifted and received an alternate curriculum.

Simcoe County has a population of 422,204 people (Statistics Canada, 2006) and the Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB) serves an enrolment of almost 50,000 students, operating 87 elementary schools and 17 secondary schools (Simcoe County District School Board, n.d.). I chose to use this school board due to the similarity of population size, and due to it geographically being approximately the same distance away from the city of Toronto as the Niagara Region.



The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) serves an enrolment of over 250,000 students and operates over 600 elementary and secondary schools (Toronto District School Board, n.d.). I chose to use this board in my comparison due to the contrast in size with the other three boards. I was curious as to whether the size of the board may have an effect on the offerings and funding of gifted education.

The results of the research I conducted can be found in the two tables labeled as Appendix A: Types of Gifted Programs Offered, and Appendix B: Identification Process for Determining Giftedness. There were several similarities between the four district school boards. All four of the district school boards offer a gifted program of some description and it is extremely rare in all of them for a student to be accelerated into a higher grade when identified as gifted or even profoundly gifted. All four of the district school boards, at the very minimum level, offer alternate curriculum within a regular classroom for students who are identified as gifted on an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). This, of course, assumes that the teacher is knowledgeable on how to provide individualized curriculum and has the time and/or desire to develop this specialized curriculum. All four of the district school boards also use standardized IQ testing to identify the gifted child, usually using a minimum of two separate tests to quantify the individual IQ of the student. Generally, they all considered a child to be gifted when he or she scores at the 98<sup>th</sup> percentile or higher on the tests (or equivalent).

There are many differences between the four district school boards. Firstly, the routine age of initial identification was found to differ in the four school boards. The HDSB implemented an earlier identification process in 2010, which tests children in senior kindergarten and/or Grade 1 for giftedness. The other three district school boards

do not start the process until Grades 3 or 4, although in the TDSB, parents or teachers can request to have a child tested earlier, but there is not a specific program to accommodate them any earlier than Grade 4.

Secondly, the district school boards differ in the grades for their formalized elementary gifted programs and the type of specific programs they offer. In the HDSB, the gifted program is offered from Grades 1 to Grade 8, and they run full-time, self-contained classes. The gifted students stay in their assigned class permanently and do not return to their regular classroom. They have all of their classes together with other gifted children exclusively. In the TDSB, the program is offered during Grades 4 to 8; however, this school board offers both full-time and part-time self-contained classes. In the part-time self-contained classes, gifted children are placed together and attend for an allotted time and then return to their regular classroom. In both the DSBN and the SCDSB, only a part-time, self-contained gifted program is offered between Grades 5 to 8 in the DSBN and between Grades 4 to 8 in the SCDSB.

Finally, the most notable difference between the four boards is the offerings in gifted education at the high school level. In the DSBN, students may be offered an enrichment club and have the option of taking Advanced Placement (AP) courses in Grades 11 or 12 at two high schools in the region. In the SCDSB, gifted students in Grades 9 to 12 are grouped together when possible, although not exclusively, into similar classes and they are also offered AP and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses at several secondary schools. In the HDSB, gifted students in Grade 9 and 10 are grouped together, but not exclusively, in core subjects, including English, math, science, geography, and history. In Grades 11 and 12, gifted students are grouped together in

university- and college-level courses, and only if timetables allow for such an accommodation. Lastly, the TDSB offers students in Grades 9 through 12 congregated grouping in regular classes and AP and IB course options and offers both full-time and part-time self-contained, gifted classes.

### **Parents of the Gifted**

Small percentages of school board budgets are spent on special education. Gifted education shares these funds and resources with the accommodations that are necessary for students with behavioral, physical, mental, and developmental issues (Association for Bright Children, 2008). This lack of funding can create competition between students with various special accommodation needs. Since district school boards are being challenged to find resources to meet the needs of average students and those with learning deficits, they sometimes shortchange gifted programming (Kitchen, as cited in Matthews & Smyth, 2000). Many teachers and board members see gifted education as an elitist program that should be the first item to face budget cutbacks (Worley, as cited in Matthews & Smyth, 2000). Parents face the likelihood that their child will spend a majority of their learning in an environment that is not appropriate to their specific educational needs. Parents need to be advocates for their child. Often, a parent who advocates for their child actually makes a bigger difference than they may realize. When a change is made for one child, teachers become more flexible and responsive in teaching methods and, therefore, become better able to meet other students' learning needs (Matthews & Foster, 2005).

In those geographical areas which are fortunate enough to provide gifted education programming, parents must make the decision whether their child will

participate, which differs from other special education programs in which participation may be mandated by the child's identification (Colangelo & Dettmann, 1983). It could be assumed that this would put pressure on the parents to make the "right" choice for their child. Parents may also have the expectation that the educational experiences for their child will improve because of their giftedness, which may not be the case (Weber & Stanley, 2012).

With the current climate of increased parental involvement in schools, it is important to ensure the satisfaction of pupils' parents in order to gain potential funding, program buy-in, and possibly maintain enrolments. In Ontario, this involvement is assumed to be even more important as it may be also tied to Education Quality and Assessment Office (EQAO) test scores and school rankings being released to the public and, therefore, parents having more choice and input on their child's education. As stated by Epstein (as cited in Hands, 2010), teachers and principals understand the benefits of parental engagement because studies have shown that successful students have families who are involved in their schooling. Parents who are involved with their child's schooling enhance the likelihood of their child's engagement and success (Matthews & Foster, 2005).

A study by Hertzog and Bennett (2003) researched how parents perceive the learning needs of their gifted child and how these needs are met by various school districts that offer differing service delivery models for gifted education. They found that parents felt that their gifted child had specific individual learning needs and 87.2% of these parents felt their gifted child needed to be challenged and stimulated. Many parents stated that they felt they had very little control of the education given to their child in

school, but felt it was their responsibility to provide extracurricular activities that would augment the child's education outside of school. The researchers also found that the families of gifted children were very sensitive to the personal, emotional, and social needs of their child and they felt that these needs were given a lower priority than academics in gifted education programs offered to their children.

Parents who have been through a gifted education program themselves may also provide district school boards valuable insight into the needs of the children that gifted programs are hoping to focus on. This could assist with program design and program modification, could present potential shortcomings and, hopefully, would increase student satisfaction and success. The audience for such research could be parents, teachers, principals, school board administrators, educational researchers, and, of course, gifted students.

Snowden and Christian (as cited in Perrone, Ksianzak et al., 2010) found that parents of gifted children show above-average abilities in a variety of parenting domains. They found that parents of gifted children encourage children's creativity, handle frustration well, understand the importance of and are involved in their child's play, and judge themselves as capable of teaching their child effectively. They also (a) understood the traits of giftedness and were able to identify these traits in their child, (b) engaged in activities with their child on a regular basis, (c) were involved in literacy activities with their child, (d) spent a great deal of time talking to their child, and (e) shared hobbies and leisure time with their child. The argument could be made these traits contribute to the successful development of gifted students regardless of biological factors.

In Perrone, Wright, Ksiazak, Crane, and Vannatter (2010), researchers conducted a longitudinal study which followed academically gifted and talented individuals in a Midwestern state since their graduation from high school in 1988, whereby participants were asked to submit yearly information. For this particular study, they hoped to increase existing knowledge of multigenerational giftedness to illuminate whether patterns of giftedness occur in families with parents who have been identified as gifted. Participants were mailed surveys, which included open-ended questions about their academic and interpersonal experiences in advanced classes. These questions included perceptions of advantage and/or disadvantage in their taking of advanced classes and whether they would wish their child to be part of similar advanced classes. They were also asked whether their child had been identified as gifted or showed signs of gifted behavior. Of the 88 participants (33 men and 55 women), 72% took advanced classes during their elementary, middle or high school years, 85% of which indicated that their experience in advanced classes was positive. Some of the notable advantages that participants stated were that advanced classes can prepare individuals for college, provide a necessary challenge academically, decrease boredom, increase engagement, allow for individually-paced learning, allow for the building of friendships with like-minded peers, and increase motivation. Conversely, students stated segregation from peers, social stigma, increased pressure to perform, increased study time requirement, the distortion of self-concept, the impact on grade point average which may affect college admissions, and age versus maturity issues (related to grade acceleration) as negative aspects of placement within advance classes. Interestingly, 88% of participants reported that they would like their child to take advanced classes, although they stated they would not push to have their

child placed in these classes if they were not academically suited to them or they expressed a desire not to be enrolled in them (Perrone, Ksianzak et al., 2010).

The way parents perceive the identified giftedness of their child was reflected in Mudrak (2011):

This aspect was also reflected in the ways in which parents in the study perceived the giftedness of their children. Parents constructed giftedness as a potential to achieve extraordinary professional results in the future provided that children continuously demonstrate giftedness, e.g., by outperforming their peers or getting excellent results. On the basis of this presumption, parents intensively pressured their children to achieve which probably supported some negative motivational outcomes, especially perfectionism. As some authors (Neumeister, 2004; Neumeister & Finch, 2006) show, ‘socially prescribed’ perfectionism may be related to unproductive coping strategies, e.g., anxiety or avoidant behaviour. (p. 213)

Morawska and Sanders (2009) presented that gifted and talented children on average do not experience more difficulties in behavior, adjustment, or mental health issues than all other children. However, they list “asynchronous development, unrealistic parental and teacher expectations, excessive and inappropriate use of praise, parental over involvement, mismatch of capabilities and instructional environment and difficulties with peer groups” as factors that may place individual children at a higher risk for developing behavioural or emotional problems (p. 164). Strom, Johnson, Strom, and Strom (1992) state “it is important that the attitude of parents toward their role as a child’s long term teacher should be favorable and include reasonable expectations” (p. 75).

## Chapter Summary

Although there are various theories, perspectives, and definitions of giftedness, there appears to be common traits which can assist in the identification of gifted individuals. The Ontario Ministry of Education has included “giftedness” as a subsection of their Special Education Act and identify students using various means in order to establish Individual Education Plans (IEP) thereby requiring schools to accommodate for these children. Unfortunately, there is not currently a standardized curriculum or regulated standards for gifted education programs within the province of Ontario. The effectiveness of gifted education programs is, therefore, hard to measure and compare. As each school board has differentiated funding and options for gifted children, it is difficult to confirm whether having more enhanced gifted programming options are better or not for the individuals involved in them.

Parents face the difficult choice of having to decide whether it is more beneficial to include their child in an alternate education program or whether to have their child remain in a mainstream classroom and provide extracurricular activities to provide the educational challenge their child is looking for. They may face frustration with teachers, principals, and school board policies which prevent their child from receiving the challenge within the classroom that they so desire.

My research explores whether parents are satisfied with the education their child is receiving and discovers any ideas they may have for the improvement of gifted education programming in the public school system in Ontario. I hope the results will provide an incentive for change within gifted education in the Province of Ontario.



## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

Throughout this study, the perspectives and opinions of parents of gifted children were examined to uncover their satisfaction with the education that their gifted child is currently receiving in Ontario schools. The study also explored the changes, if any, that these parents feel need to be made to gifted education programs in Ontario to improve their children's education. It is hoped that the result of this research will contribute to an understanding of the importance of gifted education programs in Ontario schools and a reflection of the need for gifted individuals to be granted accommodation to support their growth academically, socially, and emotionally throughout their entire enrolment within the public school system.

This chapter provides an examination of the methodology and design, selection of site and participants, instrumentation, data collection and analysis, methodological assumptions, limitations, establishing credibility, and ethical considerations for the study.

### **Research Methodology and Design**

The opinions of parents in relation to the education of their gifted child were examined with particular attention paid to their satisfaction and the type and amount of programming their child is receiving. A mixed methods research design that focused on parents' experiences with gifted education programming and their perceptions and satisfaction with these programs was used.

Within this study, I gathered both quantitative and qualitative data. As Creswell (2009) and Miles & Huberman (1994) discuss, mixed method research can be used when quantitative or qualitative research alone does not give a full understanding of the research question. Quantitative research provides broader trends and generalizations of

the specific variables that are being investigated, whereas qualitative research gives a detailed view of the participants and their voices. Within this particular study, I focused on using a sequential explanatory strategy for mixed methods research. I collected quantitative and qualitative data using a survey which included Likert scale questions and open-ended questions in which participants described the perspectives and experiences they have had with respect to gifted education in Ontario.

Within this study, I used one type of instrumentation to collect data that provided an in-depth investigation of the topic. A survey was used to gather the perceptions and opinions of parents of gifted children in Ontario. The study obtained participants with children involved in at least one of three different types of gifted programming. The type and amount of gifted programming offered to each child was examined. Further, qualitative data provided a more thorough understanding of the experiences of parents in Ontario in regards to the education of their gifted child. These data provided a richer examination of the opinions and satisfaction of parents with gifted education programming offered to their child within the schools where they are currently enrolled.

### **Selection of Sites and Participants**

Participants were sought through email correspondence with the members of the Association of Bright Children Ontario. The members of this organization, which has several chapters across Ontario, are parents of gifted children. This organization provides web-based resources, opportunities for discussion, and publications, and it holds events in the community that are focused on gifted education. Participation in this study by members of the organization was voluntary and the exact number of participants was dependent on how many received the email and then agreed to join the study.

From the initial email sent to ABC Ontario members, 72 participants took the survey. However, 16 these participants did not complete the survey in its entirety; therefore, the actual total of usable participant data came from 56 participants. The demographics of the children of these participants can be broken down as follows: 38 (68%) were male and 18 (32%) were female; 30 (54%) were in the elementary division (Kindergarten to Grade 8), 21(38%) were in the secondary division (Grade 9 to Grade 12) and 5(8%) were in the postsecondary division (college or university). Ninety-five percent of these children had been identified as gifted by an Identification Placement Review Committee (IPRC). For the 53 children who were identified as gifted learners, 13% were initially identified in Kindergarten or Grade 1, 21% in Grade 2 or 3, 54% in Grade 4 or 5, 5% in Grade 6, 7, or 8, and 2% in Grade 10. The majority of the students came from eight different district school boards in Southern Ontario; however, six attended private schools, one was home-schooled, and three were attending university.

Sixty-four percent of participants' children were receiving gifted programming of some kind. Of the 36 children who were currently enrolled in a gifted program, 24 were male and 12 were female. Of these, 67% were in elementary school, 31% were in secondary school, and 2% were receiving a postsecondary education. Of these, 64% attended a full-time gifted placement, 17% attended a gifted placement on a part-time basis, either once in the school cycle or once per month, 22% of the children received differentiated instruction within a "regular" classroom, and 9% attended either Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) classes. All of these children had been identified as gifted learners by an Identification Placement Review Committee (IPRC).

Of the 20 participants whose child was not enrolled in a gifted program, 14 had male children and 6 had female children. Of these children, 30% were in elementary school, 50% were in secondary school, and 20% were receiving a postsecondary education. Of these 20 participants, 35% stated their reason for not having their child attend a gifted program was not having one available to them. Of these same participants, 30% stated their child attends other regional placements, such as arts, science, or technology classes, as a supplement to the regular curriculum, 25% stated they did not want their child to leave established friendships within their “regular” school or class, 10% answered that they preferred to have their child in French Immersion, and 10% stated that they provided extracurricular activities that provided challenge outside of the classroom. Finally, 10% of respondents had children who had completed their schooling.

### **Instrumentation**

This study examined the opinions of parents in relation to the education of their gifted child with particular attention paid to the parents’ satisfaction and the type and amount of programming their child is receiving. In order to gain further information on this topic, a survey was created to gain a better understanding of the parents, the gifted child, the gifted programming the child is currently being offered, and the overall satisfaction of the parents in regards to this programming.

#### **Online Survey**

Fluid Survey was used for the online survey. This particular software was chosen due to the capability of online data to be stored in Canada. The survey (see Appendix C) was divided into sections, addressing several key areas, to collect both quantitative and

qualitative data. These areas included demographic information, details about the identification process, specific gifted program information, perceived quality and satisfaction of gifted programming, and suggestions for change.

The first section of questions obtained demographic information for the gifted child and explored further information regarding the process that was used to identify the child as gifted. This section also included questions that pertained to the specifics of the gifted program in which the child is currently involved.

The next section used a 5-point Likert scale to rate the perceived quality of the gifted programming being offered to the child. The options for each statement regarding the quality of the education their child is receiving was 5 (excellent), 4 (above average), 3 (average), 2 (below average), and 1 (poor). The options for each statement regarding the parental satisfaction with the programming was 5 (very satisfied), 4 (satisfied), 3 (unsure/don't know), 2 (dissatisfied), and 1 (very dissatisfied).

Finally, with the last few questions, parents were asked for their input in regards to any changes they think could or should be made to gifted education programming in Ontario.

The survey was field tested by offering it to a small number of parents of gifted children, who I know personally, to check for content validity and for clarity of the questions. The survey was also examined by two experts in gifted education to determine content and construct validity.

Open-ended questions were also included to obtain a more thorough understanding of the participants' experiences in relation to the education of their gifted child. This portion of the study was chosen as the qualitative method for collecting data

in order to answer the research questions. This form of data collection allowed for the gathering of richer data in order to reflect the experiences of parents with various types of gifted programming. The inclusion of these data allows the participants to have their opinions and voices heard.

### **Data Collection**

The parental satisfaction survey was utilized to solicit data. This instrument provided a thorough understanding of parents' perspectives and opinions in regards to the education of their gifted child.

An email was sent to the membership of ABC Ontario requesting participants to partake in the study. The email outlined the purpose of the study, the process the study followed, and the benefits and risks of participation, and it also asked for informed consent. The email included a link that participants clicked to acknowledge their consent to be included in the study. Upon clicking the link, each participant was directed to the online survey using Fluid Survey. The final question of the survey asked participants whether they would be willing to participate in further research and requested email address contact information from them.

### **Data Analysis**

The data collected were analyzed in order to provide a larger picture of the satisfaction of parents with the gifted education of their child and determined the changes, if any, that these parents felt needed to be made to improve their child's education.

Demographic information on the participants was gathered in order to better understand the individuals involved in the study. Information, such as age and gender of the gifted child and specific program information, was collected to allow for comparisons.

The survey was used to measure parents' perspectives and satisfaction with the education offered to their child within the district school board that they are enrolled within. Using this instrument, participants rated their agreement towards statements using a 5-point Likert scale. These data were analyzed using SPSS, version 20.0. The qualitative data were placed in an Excel file and organized by codes. These codes were then analyzed and the data were organized into particular themes.

### **Limitations of the Study**

One limitation of this study was the limited access to district school boards and to the parents of gifted children. By using the already established network within the Association of Bright Children, I only obtained access to this specific population of parents.

Another significant limitation to the study was my own bias. As parent of a gifted child who has had specific experiences with the Ontario education system, I needed to be acutely aware of how that bias may have influenced the way I interact with other parents of gifted children and how that may have affected my research findings. Also, as a gifted individual myself, I needed to be aware of how my own experiences with gifted programming may have affected the results of the study or the way I presented information to participants.

Another limitation to my study was the ability to obtain participants. Although using the mailing list for ABC Ontario allowed for a larger sample, the opinions of this particular population of gifted parents may be different from gifted parents who are not involved with ABC Ontario.

A final limitation to my study was that of capacity and time. As it was a fairly small study with a relatively short timeline, the number of participants that was included was limited.

### **Establishing Credibility**

Participants were given the option to review their answers while completing the survey by clicking on the “Back” button if they wished to make changes or additions. They were permitted to make changes as they saw fit if they felt the information did not accurately convey the opinions or perspectives they wished.

The choice of methodology helped to establish credibility because there are two types of data to enrich the study, qualitative and quantitative, which provide data triangulation. The data were reviewed by myself and by my supervisor to obtain consensus of the interpretation of the data, which included the thematic analysis of the qualitative data.

Throughout the study, I attempted to control for bias by being reflective in my communication with participants and my interpretation of the results. I also reviewed my responses and conclusions to attempt to neutralize my bias.

### **Methodological Assumptions**

Methodological assumptions included the belief that participants were honest in their responses about their experiences with gifted programming for their child. It was



also assumed that individuals were able to answer the survey questions with accuracy. This research involved participants who had to retrospectively recall parts of gifted programming in which their child was involved and required some participants to reflect back over several years, which may account for inconsistencies in regards to the clarity of answers.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Clearance of the proposed research was received from the Brock University Research Ethics Board prior to the recruitment of participants (File #12-286-ENGEMANN). Issues related to the study, specifically in regards to informed consent, participant withdrawal, and confidentiality, are discussed within this section.

#### **Informed Consent**

A letter of invitation was provided in the form of an email outlining the research. This email indicated (a) that participation in the study was voluntary, (b) that participants had the right to withdraw at any time, and (c) that there were risks/benefits to participating. Participants were asked to click an electronic link if they agreed to participate, serving, therefore, as each participant's informed consent.

#### **Participant Withdrawal**

Participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any point. They could withdraw from the survey at any time by clicking on the "Discard Responses and Exit" button at the bottom of the page and their information was erased.

#### **Confidentiality**

Any information that was gathered was kept in a secure location and was password protected. Participants who indicated that they wished to participate in further

research by supplying their email address had their email addresses kept in a confidential file which was password protected and any characteristics were removed that could be traced back to the individual participant.

### **Restatement of Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to explore whether parents of gifted children are satisfied with the educational experience their child is receiving within the regular mainstream classroom and within any gifted programming they are receiving. Within this study, a survey was used to elicit both qualitative and quantitative data. Information was gathered regarding the recommendations that parents may have for the improvement of education for their gifted child.

## CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

In Ontario, although Ministry of Education guidelines exist, gifted education offerings do not always address the needs of gifted individuals. Therefore, often times, parents need to be advocates for their child. The results of this study will contribute to an understanding of the importance of gifted education programs in Ontario schools and a reflection of the need for gifted individuals to be granted accommodation to support their growth academically, socially, and emotionally while enrolled in the school system. It also provides a voice for parents of gifted children regarding the educational experience their child is receiving within the regular classroom and with any gifted programming they are receiving.

In this study, an online survey was used to obtain the perspectives and opinions of parents of gifted children and to uncover their satisfaction with the education that their child is currently receiving in Ontario schools.

Specifically, three research questions guided the study:

1. What are parents' opinions of the education their gifted child is receiving within a regular classroom?
2. What are parents' opinions of the gifted programming available, if any, to their child within their local school board?
3. What recommendations do parents have for the improvement of gifted programming?

Within this study, a mixed methodology was used to obtain the data. An online survey was used to elicit both qualitative and quantitative data. This allowed for information to be gathered regarding the recommendations that parents may have for the

improvement of education for their gifted child. The quantitative data were then analyzed using SPSS software. The qualitative data were placed in an Excel file and organized by codes which were then analyzed and organized into particular themes.

An email that included an explanation of the research, and its potential risks, was sent out to the membership of the Association of Bright Children (ABC) Ontario. Within this email was a link to the online survey using Fluid Survey. The survey was organized into several key areas to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. These areas included demographic information, details about the identification process, specific gifted program information, perceived quality and satisfaction of gifted programming, and suggestions for change. For question 17, participants rated their agreement towards 12 statements using a 5-point Likert scale. This quantitative data were then analyzed using SPSS software. The qualitative data were moved to an Excel file for use within the study and any identifying criteria for participants were removed.

The research data are reported in this chapter by themes found both in the quantitative and qualitative survey data. The following key themes were identified: (a) the identification process, (b) teacher knowledge, (c) availability of resources, (d) parental involvement, and (e) school board understanding.

The remainder of this chapter will present findings of the study related to these themes.

### **Identification Process**

Parents are often very accurate at predicting whether their child is a gifted learner. As stated earlier, according to Jacobs (1971), parents have 76% accuracy in identifying gifted children in kindergarten classrooms. Parents obviously spend a great deal of time

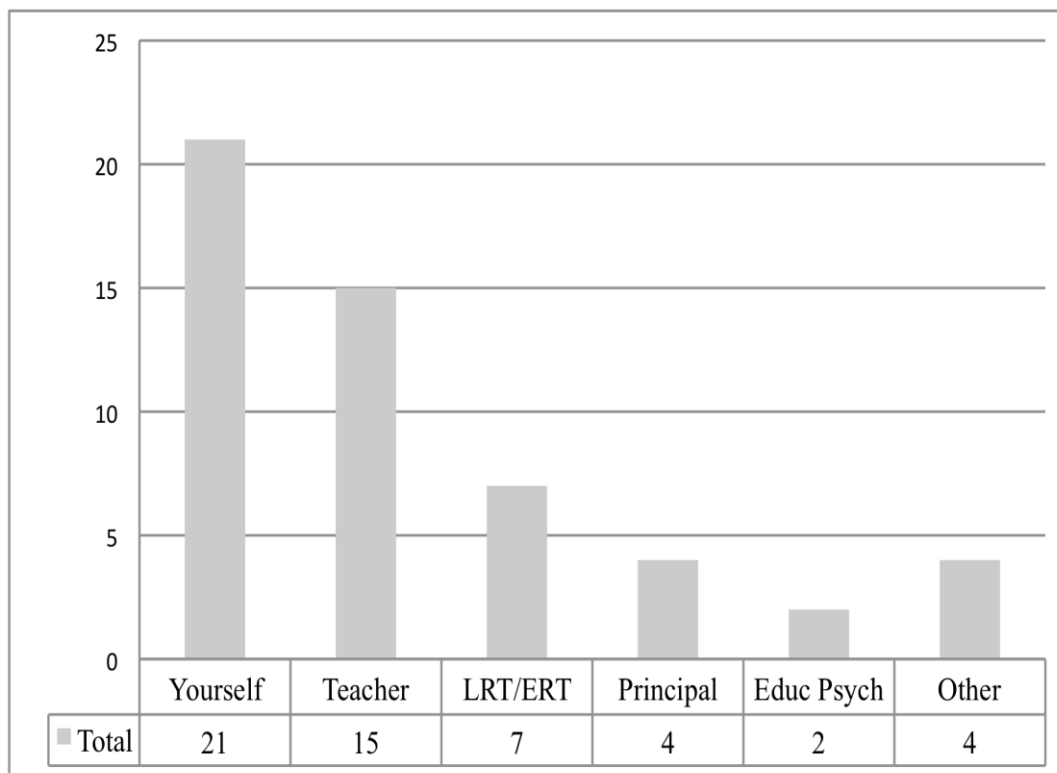
with their children and are, therefore, very aware of their behaviour. Parents can provide rich historical backgrounds of the students and they can also give insight into the interests and passions of the individual student. As shown in Figure 1, for the majority of the participants of the study, it was the parents who initiated the identification process for their child.

Several parents expressed frustration with initiating the process for their child. One participant stated, “The principal told me that all parents think their kids are gifted. [He was] very patronizing. [My son’s] testing revealed he is in the 99.7 percentile across the board.” Another participant stated:

I had no understanding of the process and, in hindsight, was much too willing to believe that the school board knew what it was doing and that would address my daughter's needs. I now wish that I had done more research at the outset so that a) we might have identified her as gifted sooner and b) some discussion and support around some of her problem areas could have been initiated.

Another parent, whose child was initially identified by a child psychologist outside of the school system, spoke of a lack of communication about the process being undertaken with the child. This parent stated “I believe that my child may have also been tested through the school, but this conclusion was only drawn recently and via a conversation I had with my child. I have had no notification from the school as to whether or not he was tested there.”

District school boards where participants’ children were enrolled also varied in the timing of identification of gifted learners. The findings amongst participants in the



*Figure 1.* Person who initiated identification of child as gifted learner.

study found 36% of children were formally identified as gifted in Kindergarten to Grade 3, 60% were identified in Grades 4–6, and 4% were identified in Grade 7 or later.

### **Teacher Knowledge**

Participants who indicated that their child is attending a gifted education placement were asked to respond on the survey to a set of Likert scale questions. The first four questions asked participants to rate their satisfaction with the content being taught in the gifted placement and of the knowledge of the teacher involved in the gifted placement. The results of these findings are presented in Table 1. The findings of two participants who indicated that their child was attending postsecondary schooling were not included in the data used to create Tables 1-5.

As is shown in Table 1, each of the four questions shows at least a 50% satisfaction with the content and the teacher of the gifted placement. However, it appears that parents of gifted females are less satisfied with the teacher's ability to accommodate for their child's specific needs. Also, there are lower levels of satisfaction for all four of the questions within the secondary division as opposed to the total scores.

Several participants made comments relating to the qualifications of the teacher that their child has in his or her gifted placement. One participant stated, "To be truthful, I have no idea about the qualifications of my son's teachers in the gifted program, the quality of the program itself, and what I should expect in a "good" gifted program." Another participant stated, "Her teacher is quite simply, amazing. She understands her students better than any other teacher I have met."

A common parental response was that their child was happy to go to the gifted placement but that they had reservations about the content being taught and whether it

Table 1

*Levels of Parental Satisfaction with the Content being Taught and the Knowledge of the Teacher within their Child's Gifted Education Placement*

Parental satisfaction with:	Division	Elementary (23) 17 Male, 6 Female			Secondary (11) 6 Male, 5 Female			Total (34) 23 Male, 11 Female		
		DIS	N	SAT	DIS	N	SAT	DIS	N	SAT
Content being taught in gifted placement	Male	4 (24%)	1 (6%)	12 (70%)	0 (0%)	3 (50%)	3 (50%)	4 (17%)	4 (17%)	15 (66%)
	Female	0 (0%)	2 (33%)	4 (67%)	2 (40%)	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	2 (18%)	4 (37%)	5 (45%)
	Total	4 (17%)	3 (13%)	16 (70%)	2 (18%)	5 (46%)	4 (36%)	6 (18%)	8 (23%)	20 (59%)
Teacher's knowledge of content being taught	Male	1 (6%)	5 (29%)	11 (65%)	0 (0%)	4 (60%)	2 (40%)	1 (4%)	9 (39%)	13 (57%)
	Female	0 (0%)	3 (50%)	3 (50%)	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	2 (40%)	2 (18%)	4 (36%)	5 (46%)
	Total	1 (4%)	8 (35%)	14 (61%)	2 (18%)	5 (46%)	4 (36%)	3 (9%)	13 (38%)	18 (53%)
Teacher's knowledge of gifted children in general	Male	2 (12%)	5 (29%)	10 (59%)	1 (17%)	3 (50%)	2 (33%)	3 (13%)	8 (%)	12 (52%)
	Female	1 (17%)	1 (17%)	4 (66%)	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	2 (40%)	3 (27%)	2 (17%)	6 (56%)
	Total	3 (13%)	6 (26%)	14 (61%)	3 (28%)	4 (36%)	4 (36%)	6 (18%)	10 (29%)	18 (53%)
Teacher's ability to address their child's needs	Male	4 (24%)	2 (11%)	11 (65%)	1 (17%)	2 (33%)	3 (50%)	5 (22%)	4 (13%)	15 (65%)
	Female	1 (17%)	3 (56%)	2 (33%)	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	2 (40%)	3 (28%)	4 (36%)	4 (36%)
	Total	5 (22%)	5 (22%)	13 (56%)	3 (27%)	3 (27%)	5 (45%)	8 (24%)	8 (24%)	20 (52%)



was beneficial for each individual child. For example, one parent stated, “My daughter is excited to go to her gifted modules once a month, but I'm not sure they are exactly what the children need. So far, the modules have not been science- or math-based.”

A few parents stated frustration with the ongoing consistency of teacher knowledge and quality. For example, one in particular stated:

I find at the elementary level, there are not enough teachers that understand how to teach gifted children. It seems like every year my daughter gets a new teacher who then learns how to be a gifted teacher. In Grade 5, the teacher didn't really understand how to grade the student according to curriculum rather than comparing to the class. This year, the teacher seems to get frustrated with the number of questions the students ask, which is to be expected in a gifted class.

### **Availability of Resources**

The next three questions within the set of Likert scale question asked participants who had children attending a gifted placement (a) to rate their satisfaction with the resources available in the gifted placement, (b) to indicate their satisfaction with the location, and (c) to identify the amount of time their child attends gifted placement. The results of these three questions can be found in Table 2.

As shown in Table 2, overall only 44% of the parents are satisfied with the resources available to their child in their gifted placement and only 47% are satisfied with the number of hours their child spends in gifted programming. These numbers are lower for those parents with a child attending a gifted placement in the secondary division. Across both divisions, parents are slightly more satisfied with respect to the physical location of the gifted placement but still hover at just over a 50% satisfaction rate.

Table 2

*Levels of Parental Satisfaction with the Availability of Resources for Gifted Education*

Parental satisfaction with the:	Division	Elementary (23) 17 Male, 6 Female			Secondary (11) 6 Male, 5 Female			Total (34) 23 Male, 11 Female		
		DIS	N	SAT	DIS	N	SAT	DIS	N	SAT
Resources available within the gifted placement	Male	3 (18%)	5 (29%)	9 (53%)	1 (17%)	3 (50%)	2 (33%)	4 (17%)	8 (35%)	11 (48%)
	Female	1 (17%)	2 (33%)	3 (50%)	2 (40%)	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	3 (28%)	4 (36%)	4 (36%)
	Total	4 (17%)	7 (31%)	12 (52%)	3 (27%)	5 (46%)	3 (27%)	7 (21%)	12 (35%)	15 (44%)
Physical location of the gifted placement	Male	5 (29%)	3 (18%)	9 (53%)	1 (17%)	1 (17%)	4 (66%)	6 (26%)	4 (17%)	13 (57%)
	Female	2 (33%)	1 (17%)	3 (50%)	0 (0%)	3 (60%)	2 (40%)	2 (18%)	4 (37%)	5 (45%)
	Total	7 (31%)	4 (17%)	12 (52%)	1 (9%)	4 (36%)	6 (55%)	8 (24%)	8 (24%)	18 (52%)
Number of hours in gifted placement that child receives	Male	5 (29%)	2 (12%)	10 (59%)	1 (17%)	2 (33%)	3 (50%)	6 (26%)	4 (17%)	13 (57%)
	Female	2 (33%)	1 (17%)	3 (50%)	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	2 (40%)	4 (37%)	2 (18%)	5 (45%)
	Total	7 (30%)	3 (13%)	13 (57%)	3 (27%)	3 (27%)	5 (46%)	10 (29%)	6 (24%)	16 (47%)

Many parents expressed frustration with the number of hours in gifted programming that their child receives from their district school board. One parent stated, “We have no gifted placements before Grade 5 or after Grade 8 in my board. Is my child only gifted from Grade 5 to 8?” Another parent states:

I can't understand why gifted children [who are] identified do not go to a program that is every day, all day, for giftedness. I'm frustrated that she has to attend a regular program 9 out of 10 days. I have considered moving to [a different] region for the availability of a full day everyday gifted program in the public schools. I hope [my area] would do the same – these gifted children have special needs and they are being limited/denied their needs.

Some parents who had a child who did not attend a gifted program at all expressed their frustration with the lack of offerings within the district school board where their child is enrolled. One parent stated, “My daughter receives little to no special programming. When she does, it is limited to an hour a week, and she is otherwise left coping with the regular curriculum. It is woefully inadequate.” In regards to offerings in the secondary division, one parent stated, “I would love the school board to have resources put in place for high school aged children.”

Many parents spoke about the benefits of attending a gifted program for their child. One parent stated, “He is able to connect with like-minded individuals/peers, of whom he has few in his home school and neighbourhood,” and another stated, “The best thing about the contained gifted program [in our] board is that the gifted kids are together. My son has friends who ‘get’ him and truly want to be his friend.” Many also spoke of the negative aspect of the child not being located in their home school and,

therefore, with other children in their same geographical area for connections outside of the school day. As expressed by one parent, “The loss of being connected to his home school and, therefore, the loss of contacts with children who will eventually be in high school with my son is a negative.”

### **Parental Involvement**

The next two questions within the set of Likert scale questions asked participants who had a child attending a gifted placement to rate their satisfaction with the communication they receive from teachers and administrators in the gifted placement and to explain their personal involvement in the placement. The results of these two questions are presented in Table 3.

Parental satisfaction rates for these two questions were much lower than the previous questions. Only 35% of participants were satisfied with the communication they receive from teachers and administrators of the gifted program attended by their child. Even lower, only 33% were satisfied with their involvement in the gifted placement. These percentages were slightly lower for parents with a child in the secondary division.

A few parents spoke of the communication they receive from the gifted placement. One parent stated, “It is very bare bones and does not individually meet the needs of my son. There is very limited communication with the teachers and no program that is specifically geared to his proficiencies.” Another parent stated, “There is an inability for parents to get to know the teachers there and conference with them, as well as the lack of one on one time with the students is a real negative.”

Table 3

*Rates of Parental Satisfaction with their Involvement in Their Child's Gifted Placement*

Parental satisfaction with:	Division	Elementary (23) 17 Male, 6 Female			Secondary (11) 6 Male, 5 Female			Total (34) 23 Male, 11 Female		
		DIS	N	SAT	DIS	N	SAT	DIS	N	SAT
Communication to parents from the gifted placement	Male	5 (30%)	6 (35%)	6 (35%)	2 (33%)	3 (50%)	1 (17%)	7 (30%)	9 (40%)	7 (30%)
	Female	1 (17%)	2 (33%)	3 (50%)	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	2 (40%)	3 (27%)	3 (27%)	5 (46%)
	Total	6 (26%)	8 (35%)	9 (39%)	4 (36%)	4 (36%)	3 (28%)	10 (30%)	12 (35%)	12 (35%)
Their involvement in the gifted placement	Male	5 (29%)	5 (29%)	7 (42%)	1 (17%)	4 (66%)	1 (17%)	6 (26%)	9 (39%)	8 (35%)
	Female	1 (17%)	4 (66%)	1 (17%)	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	2 (40%)	3 (27%)	5 (46%)	3 (27%)
	Total	6 (26%)	9 (39%)	8 (35%)	3 (27%)	5 (46%)	3 (27%)	9 (26%)	14 (41%)	11 (33%)

### **School Board Understanding**

The next three questions within the set of Likert scale questions asked participants who had a child attending a gifted placement to rate their satisfaction with understanding that district school boards have to accommodate for their gifted child and with the funding allocated to gifted programs within their school board. These findings are presented in Table 4.

As is shown in Table 4, only 18% of parents are satisfied with the understanding that the school board has to accommodate for their child and only 14% of parents are satisfied with the funding allocated by the board to gifted education.

Many parents spoke about the frustration they feel in the distribution of special education funding within their board. One parent stated, “It was one huge struggle to get any accommodation for being gifted. They refused to modify the curriculum expectations. Most of the attention, time, and resources are given to students who demonstrate a learning disability,” and another stated, “My experience is that there's a lot of funding going into special needs at the lower end of the spectrum, but not necessarily the ‘gifted’ end of the spectrum.” Another participant stated:

It often seemed that the school administration would have preferred to redirect the funding and resources to children at the other end of the bell curve. Sometimes school staff thought I was just an entitled parent when I advocated for my son.

The refusal to advance the curriculum or 'skip a grade' was short-sighted and did not help to keep my son engaged in school-based learning.

Some parents also spoke to the inability for the district school board to properly provide resources for teachers that would allow for support for gifted children. One

Table 4

*Parental Satisfaction with the Understanding of District School Boards to Accommodate  
for Their Gifted Child*

Parental satisfaction with the:	Division	Elementary (23) 17 Male, 6 Female			Secondary (11) 6 Male, 5 Female			Total (34) 23 Male, 11 Female		
		DIS	N	SAT	DIS	N	SAT	DIS	N	SAT
Understanding of school boards to accommodate for their child	Male	11 (64%)	3 (18%)	3 (18%)	3 (50%)	3 (50%)	0 (%)	14 (61%)	6 (26%)	3 (13%)
	Female	1 (17%)	3 (50%)	2 (33%)	2 (40%)	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	3 (27%)	5 (46%)	3 (27%)
	Total	12 (52%)	6 (26%)	5 (22%)	5 (45%)	5 (45%)	1 (10%)	17 (50%)	11 (32%)	6 (18%)
Funding allocated to gifted education within their school board	Male	11 (74%)	2 (13%)	2 (13%)	2 (33%)	3 (50%)	1 (17%)	13 (62%)	5 (24%)	3 (14%)
	Female	1 (25%)	3 (75%)	0 (%)	1 (25%)	2 (50%)	1 (25%)	2 (25%)	5 (63%)	1 (12%)
	Total	12 (63%)	5 (26%)	2 (11%)	3 (30%)	5 (50%)	2 (20%)	15 (52%)	10 (34%)	4 (14%)

parent stated, “The classroom teacher does not get any additional support in terms of support staff, resources, specific training, or even extra time to provide sufficient stimulation for the gifted children within her class.” Another parent spoke of the tendency of the district school board to offset costs by encouraging students to enrol in courses that cost money. This parent stated, “The program is not supported by the school staff or the board staff. They try to push the gifted kids into the programs that parents have to pay extra for, like IB, IBT, AP, etc.”

### **Overall Satisfaction**

The final question within the set of Likert scale questions asked participants who have a child attending a gifted placement to rate their overall satisfaction with the gifted placement that their child is attending. These findings are presented in Table 5.

As shown in Table 5, only 38% of parents are satisfied with the gifted programming their child is receiving. In the secondary division, parents are only 27% satisfied with the placement. Overall, parental satisfaction levels are lower for parents with a gifted child who is female.

### **Chapter Summary**

In summary, the findings in my study found that parents are somewhat satisfied with the content of material being taught, the teacher’s knowledge of gifted children, the resources available, the physical location, and the number of hours within a gifted placement that their child is receiving. However, they are less satisfied with the communication by educators within the gifted placement, their own involvement in the gifted placement, the accommodation made by the district school board, and the funding



Table 5

*Parents Overall Satisfaction with Their Child's Gifted Placement*

Parental satisfaction with the:	Division	Elementary (23) 17 Male, 6 Female			Secondary (11) 6 Male, 5 Female			Total (34) 23 Male, 11 Female		
		DIS	N	SAT	DIS	N	SAT	DIS	N	SAT
Gifted placement overall	Male	7 (41%)	2 (12%)	8 (47%)	2 (33%)	2 (33%)	2 (33%)	9 (39%)	4 (18%)	10 (43%)
	Female	0 (0%)	4 (60%)	2 (40%)	3 (60%)	1 (20%)	1 (20%)	3 (27%)	5 (46%)	3 (27%)
	Total	7 (30%)	6 (27%)	10 (43%)	5 (46%)	3 (27%)	3 (27%)	12 (35%)	9 (27%)	13 (38%)

allocated to gifted education. A large percentage of participants also gave, what I would evaluate as, a poor satisfaction rating overall to their child's gifted education program.

In this chapter, the results were reported by themes that were discovered through the online survey. The results included both quantitative and qualitative data. Chapter Five consists of the summary, discussion, and implications of the research. The suggestions made by participants for possible change to gifted education in Ontario are also discussed in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, DISCUSSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS**

The study of gifted education has allowed for development and improvement of educational offerings to gifted individuals; however, further research needs to be established. Many researchers have discussed the importance of gifted education programming for gifted learners (Berman et al., 2012; Brulles & Winebrenner, 2011; Matthews & Foster, 2005) for both their intellectual and emotional needs. The purpose of this study was to explore the level of satisfaction parents of gifted children have with their child's education within the regular mainstream classroom and/or, where it exists, specialized gifted programming.

Throughout this study, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analysed to explore the level of parental satisfaction with their gifted child's programming in Ontario schools. The findings also identified the changes, if any, that these parents feel need to be made to gifted education programs in Ontario to improve their child's education. To gain an understanding of the research conducted, a summary of the study, discussion of the findings, and an examination of the possible implications of the results are presented in this chapter.

### **Summary**

Within this study, a mixed methodology was used to obtain the data. An online survey was used to elicit both qualitative and quantitative data. This allowed for information to be gathered regarding the recommendations that parents may have for the improvement of education for their gifted child.

## Discussion

Many parents in the study spoke of their lack of satisfaction with the identification process in which their child was involved. Many were unsatisfied with the timing of the initial evaluation and thought that, in fact, the testing should have been done much earlier. As reported by Perleth, Schatz, and Monks (2000), teachers and those responsible for identifying gifted children should be cautious when attempting to predict high ability at an early age due to the child's rapid development prior to age 10. This is fairly consistent with the practices followed within district school boards across Ontario and, indeed, within the test sample for this study, as the small majority (54%) of the participants in the study had their child initially identified in either Grade 4 or Grade 5. However, having an earlier identification could allow for some leverage for parents to get additional resources for their child in much earlier grades. In my son's case, having him formally identified earlier than Grade 4 would have required that an Individual Education Plan be prepared for him, which may have enabled us to push his classroom teachers to give him more breadth within the curriculum. However, earlier identification would not have allowed him to enter a more substantial gifted placement as one is not available within our school board for children younger than Grade 5. Many parents indicated that they were unaware that the formal identification process was happening before, and in a few cases, even after, the process had occurred.

Many parents within the study expressed a feeling of being unaware of the process or being made to feel like they were just being "pushy parents." Many also spoke of being made to feel that they were overexaggerating the abilities, gifts, and talents that their child had. This is consistent with the experience that I have had with

every teacher my son has had. As stated by Jacobs (1971), the accuracy that Kindergarten teachers have to identify gifted children in their classrooms sits at approximately 10%, while accuracy for parents to identify their child as gifted is approximately 76%. The obvious question is: Why do district school boards and teachers not listen to the perspectives of parents in regards to their children? Is this due to the child not fitting the mold of what a gifted child is supposed to look like or an indifference about or ignorance to the needs of gifted children?

Having known several teachers, including those teachers who I dealt with regarding my son, my experience has been that teachers truly want to see their students succeed. Knowing this, I cannot believe that teachers would make the decision not to provide for gifted children for any other reason than lack of knowledge, resources, or opportunity. Teachers are responsible for an ever-increasing workload with less funding and support that would allow them to modify curriculum and differentiate the learning of each individual student in their classroom. It seems obvious to me that additional funding and educational training opportunities need to be granted to teachers so that they can understand, and accommodate for, gifted children.

Many of the participants spoke of the lack of knowledge and understanding of giftedness and gifted children by teachers within regular classrooms. They discussed how teachers are unwilling or unable to change the content of their lessons to better reflect the needs of individual students within their classes. In my experience, and in several of the participants' experiences, teachers in regular classes tend to give gifted children more of the same work rather than providing breadth to the curriculum they are teaching. There also appears to be a tendency not to allow children to accelerate within

subjects even if their abilities are far above their current grade level. As stated by VanTassel-Baska and Stambaugh (2006), “it is the role of the teacher to intensify or slacken the curriculum experience that has been planned to accommodate individual differences” (p. 19).

Even the parents who had a child attending a gifted placement classroom spoke about how their child was being taught by teachers in the gifted program who had not had any previous training with respect to gifted education. It would be interesting to uncover exactly how much training specific to giftedness teacher candidates are given within their Bachelor of Education degree in Ontario and to teachers who are employed to provide gifted programming. I would suspect very little additional training beyond the Additional Qualification Special Education 1 course is required. Hopefully, this will be addressed with the expansion of Teacher Education programs in Ontario to a 4-term model, and, specifically, with the push from the Ministry of Education and the Ontario College of Teachers to include more special education training within these programs (Ontario College of Teachers, 2013). In some district school boards, during a particular year of schooling within a gifted education program, there is considerable teacher turnover throughout the school year. Some participants noted that many of the teachers replacing others within these classes have never taught children in a gifted program before.

However, several participants had very positive experiences with the teachers their child had in their gifted placement. Several noted how these teachers allowed children to pursue their interests within the boundaries of the curriculum and to learn in a more individualized manner while emphasizing the importance of creative and critical thinking skills. It has been my experience that the teachers my son has within the

program encourage the children to think “outside the box” and allow them to self-motivate and have more control over their learning. He enjoys attending the placement because the pace appears to be more similar to his ability; he is not bored and is not waiting for the rest of the class to understand concepts. He also loves being able to undertake tasks that he would never be allowed to do within the regular classroom. Many of the participants of the study indicated that their child had a similar appreciation.

When the participants were asked positive aspects of the gifted program, almost all noted the benefit of their child being placed in an educational setting with like-minded peers. Many parents indicated that their child did not fit well within a regular classroom setting and that many were ostracized for being different. Many participants noted how much more confident, self-reliant, and more social their child has been since attending a gifted placement class. Several stated that having their child placed in a gifted placement allowed them to make friends for the first time since they began school. Eddles-Hirsch, Vialle, McCormick, and Rogers (2012) found that gifted individuals find it much easier to make friends within their gifted or advanced program. According to Eddles-Hirsch et al., gifted children feel more understood and accepted by their class peers, even when they share interests that are not considered “cool” in the regular classroom.

Many participants spoke of the lack of programming available to their child. Some district school boards have no formalized gifted programming to offer gifted children, who must then rely on the regular classroom teacher to differentiate the curriculum for them. Many parents expressed frustration that differentiated instruction was not being offered to their child. A lack of resources means that these teachers must spend their additional time with those children who were struggling to meet minimum

requirements. For some parents, their children attended a gifted placement but only infrequently and many expressed a dissatisfaction with the number of hours that their child attended the program. Most parents were also not satisfied with the offerings and resources available to children in the secondary school years. The majority of parents expressed the opinion that their children received little to no formal programming in high school, other than being offered tuition-based International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement courses.

A theme expressed by the majority of parents spoke to the lack of funding allocated to gifted education programs by district school boards. Many parents expressed frustration with the fact that the majority of funding being allocated to special education goes to programs other than those for gifted children, to them, this seemed unfair and unbalanced. Within the district school board where my son is enrolled over the last 10 years, financial restrictions have been made by the board administrators to gifted education programs. Our district school board used to run a full-time exclusively gifted class for children in Grades 6 to 8; however, this was eliminated several years ago due to funding cuts. Additional funding would allow for increased access to resources for gifted programming, which might include additional time for these students to spend in a gifted placement. It may also allow for gifted placement to start earlier and continue into the high school grades.

Another significant theme that arose from the study was that many parents do not feel involved in the education of their child. This was especially true for those parents whose child attended a gifted placement class at a distance from their home school. Many indicated that they had not met or had any communication with the teacher within



this class. This is consistent with my experience as I have not received any communication from the teacher or coordinator of the gifted program that my son attends, other than the initial list of dates he is required to attend and his alternative report card, both which are sent home. We do not receive newsletters or updates or, more importantly, requests for our involvement with the program. Several parents noted that although it is stated as a requirement in board-mandated special education guides, they are not included in any discussion regarding their child's Individual Education Plan (IEP). A few participants noted that the IEP given to their child actually contains very little information beyond the child's identification as gifted and a statement surrounding the need to accommodate as needed. My son's IEP is very similar to this except that his includes the statement "resources and accommodation by Learning Resource Teacher as required," which when asked, he states has never happened. As Hands (2010) discusses, parental involvement in schools allows parents to feel respected, which can foster advocacy for schools and communities. This can allow parents and families to be fully engaged partners in their child's education.

### **Implications**

The implications of these research findings for gifted education in Ontario are discussed next. These include suggestions for how gifted education could be improved and the implications for future research.

#### **Implications for Gifted Education**

The findings in this study show that more needs to be done in regards to the training of all teachers to understand the complexities of gifted individuals and what kind of education can best serve their needs. An increase of the content related to gifted

children needs to be included in teacher education programs across the province so newly taught teachers have a foundational knowledge about robust educational programming strategies for gifted children. Also, in-service or professional development opportunities need to be presented to regular classroom teachers to increase their knowledge of gifted students and to break some of the myths associated with how they learn. Teachers need to be provided with information on how they can differentiate the instruction within their classes to help all children learn better.

Those teachers who are hired to teach in gifted withdrawal program classes or segregated gifted classrooms should be required to take further education specifically related to gifted education; for example, the Additional Qualification course Teaching Students with Intellectual Needs (Giftedness), which is offered at several faculties of education in Ontario. This additional educational opportunity should provide these teachers with a beginning level of knowledge about programming for gifted children.

In order for these changes to be implemented, funding from school boards needs to increase to allow for the further education of teachers who are already working within schools. Funding equations need to be more transparent to allow the general public to see where the money related to special education programs is being allocated. District school boards also need to present more information to the general public as to why gifted children require special education. This will, hopefully, provide the knowledge necessary to reduce the belief by many members of the general public that gifted programming is elitist and help them to understand the need to provide an appropriate level of education for all children, including those who are gifted.

Some district school boards also need to increase special education funding to initiate gifted programs. In many of the responses from participants, although parents would like to see additional hours within a gifted education program, even those who have a child attending a gifted program on a part-time basis are happy that their child at least gets some programming. Many parents also expressed the belief that they would like to see gifted programming offered at more locations than just at one, centralized gifted education centre. This would allow more children to stay at their home school, thus maintaining social connections with children within their geographical area.

Many parents spoke to the need for the identification process to be started much earlier. Several spoke of the frustration they have experienced for the first few years of their child's school experience. In my experience as I have noted previously, my son was bored in school starting from Junior Kindergarten with no accommodation made until he was finally formally identified in Grade 5. This accounts for the first 6 years of his school experience, which, in my opinion, is unacceptable. It is also apparent from the findings of the study that teachers, principals, learning resource teachers, and school board officials need to take the perspectives of parents seriously, especially with respect to the belief that parents have their child being gifted. There is a good chance that they are right!

An increase in funding for gifted education would allow for an expansion of current programming in those areas that already offer some gifted programs. This increased allocation of funds for gifted education may also allow for the enrollment of younger children into gifted programs and/or for the maintenance of access to a gifted program into the secondary school years. Many parents in this study expressed a

frustration with district school boards because they do not provide gifted programming for this older group of students; these parents believe that district school boards only view their child as a gifted learner until they completed Grade 8. In my opinion, the lack of or reduction to gifted programming at the secondary school level is a very real problem in many Ontario district school boards.

Many parents in this study discussed how the content within gifted programs needs to change to allow students to broaden their knowledge of particular subjects in which they already excel (e.g., math, science, or art). Many also noted the need for gifted learners to have additional time to explore particular topics that they wanted to learn about at a deeper level. Several parents believe that district school boards need to allow students to accelerate in particular subjects in which they excel even if it means that they attend classes above their grade range. Many parents did not want their child to be moved up in grade level for all courses, but they encouraged subject-specific acceleration, particularly in math and the sciences, when their child needs further challenge. I think parents are afraid of the social consequences of acceleration and they believe that their child may be ostracized in the classroom with older children. However, in my opinion, there could be as much, or more, negative consequences for children who remain in a classroom where they are not stimulated and/or challenged.

The most important finding that emerged from this research is that parents are not being involved in the education of their child especially when their child is involved in a gifted placement. It appears that amongst the participants in this study, very little communication with the gifted teacher is taking place. Many parents claim that they have not met or had any communication with their child's gifted teacher at all. Parents in

this study did feel included in the gifted placement that their child attends, relying on the child to inform them of how the placement was going and what they were doing there. Parents need to feel involved in their child's education and that they are an important resource for teachers to find out more information about the behaviours, interests, talents, and passions of their child. Teachers of gifted children need to see parents as part of their community, and as a source of rich insights, which could only serve to improve the outcomes for this population of learners.

### **Implications for Further Research**

This study supports the argument that more research is needed in the field of gifted education and that improvements need to be made in order to better serve gifted learners. While gifted education has been in existence in Ontario for many years, very little research has been done in relation to the opinions of parents of gifted children within Ontario schools. In this study, parents were very vocal about the changes that need to be implemented in gifted education, most notably in regards to teacher training, expansion of programs, funding allocation by district school boards, and parental involvement. Research to determine the degree of satisfaction that parents have with programming of gifted children needs to continue across a broader area of Ontario. It would also be informative to know whether differentiated instruction is being offered in the mainstream classroom, particularly for gifted children, and whether parents find this is beneficial to their child. Due to the small sample size in this study, it was difficult to make comparisons between district school boards and full-time versus part-time offerings in relation to parental satisfaction. Replication of this study with a larger sample size would allow for such comparisons to be made. Research that monitored parent

satisfaction rates over a longer period of time would also be beneficial, but due to time constraints was not possible within this particular study. There is also a gap in the research on the perspectives of the children themselves who are involved in gifted programs; this, however, is difficult due to school board regulations. Another significant gap in current research is the perspective of teachers regarding giftedness and gifted education both for regular classroom teachers and those teachers who specifically teach in gifted programs. Research into these particular areas would provide valuable insight that would allow the Ministry of Education, the Ontario College of Teachers, faculties of education, superintendents, principals, and teachers to implement changes in gifted education across the province.

### **Final Words**

The programming offered to gifted individuals varies across the province of Ontario and is always changing. Research in this area improves the likelihood that these changes are for the betterment of gifted education programs and beneficial for gifted children. By including the perspective of parents within these discussions and studies, we can obtain the full picture of gifted children and how to better satisfy their needs. This study sought to understand the perspectives of parents of gifted children and determine their level of satisfaction with the educational experience their child is receiving. The study also sought to identify the changes, if any, that these parents feel need to be made to gifted education programs in Ontario to improve their child's education.

On a personal level, I undertook this research as both a parent of a gifted child and as an individual who had been involved in gifted programming as a child. It is my

feeling that more needs to be done to address the particular needs of gifted learners in Ontario classrooms. It is unacceptable that children should be in classrooms where they are unchallenged, understimulated, unmotivated, and unable to achieve to their full potential. As the Ontario Ministry of Education (2001) states, giftedness can be defined as “an usually advanced degree of general intellectual ability that requires differentiated learning experiences of a depth and breadth beyond those normally provided in the regular school program to satisfy the level of educational potential indicated” (p. A20). It has not been my experience that differentiated instruction is being used appropriately for the needs of my son. This experience appears to be echoed in the experiences of the participants of my study. It is my opinion that changes to gifted education programming need to occur to ensure that gifted children have their educational potential realized.

## References

- Association for Bright Children. (n.d.). *Signs of giftedness*. Retrieved from <http://www.abcontario.ca/support/understanding-giftedness/signs-of-giftedness>
- Association for Bright Children. (2008). *ABC Ontario's gifted information resource guide: A concise overview of gifted education programming in Ontario school boards*. Retrieved from <http://www.abcontario.ca/component/abadmin/?task=listboards>
- Baudson, T.G. & Preckel, F. (2013). Teachers' implicit personality theories about the gifted: an experimental approach. *School Psychology, 28*(1), 37-46.
- Berman, K. M., Schultz, R. A., & Weber, C. L. (2012). A lack of awareness and emphasis in pre-service teacher training: Preconceived beliefs about the gifted and talented. *Gifted Child Today, 35*(1), 19–26.
- Brulles, D., & Winebrenner, S. (2011). The schoolwide cluster grouping model: Restructuring gifted education services for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *Gifted Child Today, 34*(4), 35–46.
- Colangelo, N., & Dettmann, D. F. (1983). A review of research on parents and families of gifted children. *Exceptional Children, 50*(1), 20–27.
- Clark, B. (1997). *Growing up gifted* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed method approaches* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dickens, W. T., & Flynn, J. R. (2001). Heritability estimates versus large environmental effects: The IQ paradox resolved. *Psychological Review, 108*(2), 346–369.



- District School Board of Niagara. (n.d.). *About the DSBN*. Retrieved from <http://www.dsbn.org/about/>
- District School Board of Niagara School Support Services. (n.d.). *Gifted education*. Retrieved from: <http://dsbn.org/supportservices/SE/gifted.html>
- District School Board of Niagara. (2012). *Special education report 2012-2013*. Retrieved from <http://dsbn.org/supportservices/SE/sereport/SE-Report2012-2013.pdf>
- Drake, J. E., & Winner, E. (2012). Predicting artistic brilliance. *Scientific American Mind*, 23(5), 42–48.
- Eddles-Hirsch, K., Vialle, W., McCormick, J., & Rogers, K. (2012). Insiders or outsiders: The role of social context in the peer relations of gifted students. *Roeper Review*, 34(1), 53–62.
- Epstein, J. L. (2007). Connections count: Improving family and community involvement in secondary schools. *Principal Leadership*, 8(2), 16–22.
- Grinder, R. E. (1990). Sources of giftedness in nature and nurture: Historical origins of enduring controversies. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 34(2), 50–55.
- Halton District School Board. (n.d.). *Elementary and secondary enrolment predictions 2012-13*. Retrieved from <http://www.hdsb.ca/Schools/Pages/Schools.aspx>
- Halton District School Board. (2012). *Special education plan*. Retrieved from <http://www.hdsb.ca/Downloads/SPED%20Plan%202012-2013.pdf>
- Hands, C. M. (2010). Parental engagement in school decision making and governance. In D. H. Michael (Ed.), *Promising practices to support family involvement in schools* (pp. 97-128). Charlotte, NC: Information Age.

- Harrison, G. E., & Van Haneghan, J. P. (2011). The gifted and the shadow of the night: Dabrowski's overexcitabilities and their correlation to insomnia, death anxiety, and fear of the unknown. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 34, 669–697.
- Helding, L. (2009). Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. *Journal of Singing*, 66(2) 193–199.
- Hertzog, N. B., & Bennett, T. (2003). In whose eyes? Parents' perspectives on the learning needs of their gifted children. *Roeper Review*, 26(2), 96–104.
- Jacobs, J. (1971). Effectiveness of teacher and parent identification of gifted children as a function of school level. *Psychology in the Schools*, 8, 140–142.
- Lamont, R. T. (2012). The fears and anxieties of gifted learners. *Gifted Child Today*, 35(4), 271–276.
- Mathews, F. N. (1981). Influencing parents' attitudes toward gifted education. *Exceptional Children*, 48(2), 140–143.
- Matthews, D. J., & Foster, J. F. (2005). *Being smart about gifted children: A guidebook for parents and educators*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.
- Matthews, D. J., & Smyth, E. M. (2000). Gifted learners in Ontario enter the new millennium: Common sense style? *Alberta Gifted and Talented Education*, 14(2), 53–59.
- Miles, A., & Huberman, A. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Morawska, A., & Sanders, M. (2009). Parenting gifted and talented children: Conceptual and empirical foundations: *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 53(3), 163–173.

- Mudrak, J. (2011). 'He was born that way': Parental constructions of giftedness: *High Ability Studies*, 22(2), 199–217.
- National Association for Gifted Children. (n.d.). *What is giftedness?* Retrieved from <http://www.nagc.org/index.aspx?id=574&an>
- Ontario College of Teachers. (2013). *College helps shape new teacher education programs*. Retrieved from: <http://www.oct.ca/public/media/announcements/minister-visit>
- Ontario Ministry of Education. (2001). *Special education: A guide for educators*. Toronto, Canada: Queen's Printer for Ontario.
- Ontario Ministry of Education. (2011). *Learning for all: A guide for effective assessment and instruction for all students, Kindergarten to Grade 12*. Retrieved from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/learningforall2011.pdf>
- Ontario Ministry of Education (2012). *The education act on special education*. Retrieved from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/edact.html>
- Perleth, C., Schatz, T., & Monks, F. J. (2000). Early identification of high ability. In K. A. Heller, F. J. Monks, R. J. Sternberg, & R. F. Subotnik (Eds.), *International handbook of giftedness and talent* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; pp. 297–316). Oxford, UK: Elsevier Science.
- Perrone, K. M., Ksianzak T. M., Wright, S. L., Vannatter, A., Crane A. L., & Tanney, A. (2010). Multigenerational giftedness: Perceptions of giftedness across three generations. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 33(4), 606–627.

- Perrone, K. M., Wright, S. L., Ksiazak, T. M., Crane, A. L., & Vannatter, A. (2010). Looking back on lessons learned: Gifted adults reflect of their experiences in advance classes: *Roeper Review*, 32, 127–139.
- Plomin, R., Owen, M. J., & McGuffin, P. (1994). The genetic basis of complex human behaviors. *Science*, 264(5166), 1733–1739.
- Renzulli, J. S. (2005). The three-ring conception of giftedness: A developmental model for promoting creative productivity. In R. J. Sternberg & J. E. Davidson (Eds.), *Conceptions of Giftedness* (pp. 246–279). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Ruse, M. (2006). Flawed intelligence, flawed design. *Virginia Quarterly Review*, 82(2), 54–77.
- Seagoe, M. V. (1975). *Terman and the gifted*. Los Altos, CA: William Kaufmann.
- Shurkin, J. N. (1992). *Terman's kids: The ground breaking study of how the gifted grow up*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown.
- Simcoe County District School Board. (n.d.). *Report to the community*. Retrieved from <http://www.scdsb.on.ca/Board/Board%20Documents/Report-to-the-Community-2011-12.pdf>
- Simcoe County District School Board. (2012). *Special education report*. Retrieved from <http://www.scdsb.on.ca/Programs/Program%20Documents/Special-Education-Report.pdf>

- Statistics Canada. (2006). *Population and dwelling counts, for Canada, provinces and territories, census divisions, and census subdivisions (municipalities)*. Retrieved from <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/data/popdwell/Table.cfm?T=304&SR=1&S=1&O=A&RPP=10&PR=35&CMA=0>
- Sternberg, R. J., & Clinkenbeard, P. (1995). A triarchic view of identifying, teaching, and assessing gifted children. *Roeper Review*, *17*, 255–260.
- Strom, R., Johnson, A., Strom, S., & Strom, P. (1992). Parental differences in expectations of gifted education: *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, *23*(1), 69–77.
- Thompson, L. E., & Oehlert, J. (2010). The etiology of giftedness. *Learning and Individual Differences*, *20*, 298–307.
- Toronto District School Board. (n.d.). *About the TDSB*. Retrieved from <http://www.tdsb.on.ca/aboutUs/>
- Toronto District School Board. (2012). *Special education report*. Retrieved from: [http://www.tdsb.on.ca/wwwdocuments/parents/special\\_education\\_2/docs/Spec%20Ed%20Rpt%20July%202012%20Final.pdf](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/wwwdocuments/parents/special_education_2/docs/Spec%20Ed%20Rpt%20July%202012%20Final.pdf)
- VanTassel-Baska, J., & Stambaugh, T. (2006). *Comprehensive curriculum for gifted learners*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education.
- Vinkhuyzen, A. A. E., van der Sluis, S., Posthuma, D., & Boomsma, D. I. (2009). The heritability of aptitude and exceptional talent across different domains in adolescents and young adults. *Behavioural Genetics*, *39*, 380–392.

- Weber, C. L., & Stanley, L. (2012). Educating parents of gifted children: Designing effective workshops in changing parent perceptions. *Gifted Child Today*, 35(2), 129–136.
- Winner, E. (2000). The origins and ends of giftedness. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 159–169.
- Yun Dai, D. (2010). *The nature and nurture of giftedness: A new framework for understanding gifted education*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Zabloski, J., & Milacci, F. (2012). Gifted dropouts: Phenomenological case studies of rural gifted students. *Journal of Ethnographic & Qualitative Research*, 6, 175–190.

## Appendix A

### Types of Gifted Programs Offered

School Board	Elementary			Secondary		
	Gifted Program	Grades Offered	Type of Gifted Program	Gifted Program	Grades Offered	Type of Gifted Program
District School Board of Niagara	Yes	5 – 8	- P/T self-contained class - Alternate curriculum within regular class	No	N/A	AP courses offered at 2 high schools in board
Halton District School Board	Yes	1 – 8	- F/T self-contained class - Alternate curriculum within regular class	Yes	9 - 12	- Gr 9 & 10 - Congregated grouping in core subjects (Engl., Math, Sci, Geog., Hist.) – not exclusive - Gr. 11 & 12 – Congregated into University level courses – not exclusive
Simcoe County District School Board	Yes	4 – 8	- P/T self-contained class - Alternate Curriculum within reg. class	Yes	9 - 12	- Congregated grouping in some subjects as timetable permits - IB and AP course options
Toronto District School Board	Yes	4 – 8	- P/T self-contained class - F/T self-contained class - Alternate curriculum within regular class	Yes	9 - 12	- Part-time self-contained class - Full-Time self-contained class - Congregated grouping in regular classes - IB and AP course options

District School Board of Niagara. (2012); Halton District School Board. (2012); Simcoe County District School Board (2012); Toronto District School Board (2012).

## Appendix B

### Identification Process for Determining Giftedness

School Board	Routine Age of Initial Testing	Accelerator Offered	Type of Test Used	Defining Percentile
District School Board of Niagara	Grade 4	No	C-CAT  Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC-IV)	At or above 98 <sup>th</sup> percentile
Halton District School Board	SK/Grade 1	No	Otis Lennon Scholastic Ability Test (OLSAT)  Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT)  General Ability Index (GAI)  Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC – IV)	Students scoring 130+ on OLSAT and 130+ on NNAT OR Students scoring 120+ on OLSAT and 130+ on NNAT in addition to scoring 130+ on WISC-IV/GAI
Simcoe County District School Board	Grade 3	No	Otis Lennon Scholastic Ability Test (OLSAT)  Full Scale Intelligence Quotient (FSIQ)  General Ability Index (GAI)  Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC – IV)	At or above 99 <sup>th</sup> Percentile on OLSAT (135+) OR OLSAT score of 130+ when verbal or non-verbal score is at or above 140 OR Score on FSIQ or GAI or WISC-IV at 98 <sup>th</sup> percentile (130+) OR Score on GAI or WISC-IV of 125+ and verbal comprehension or perceptual reasoning on WISC-IV score in 98 <sup>th</sup> percentile
Toronto District School Board	Grade 3	No	General Ability Index (GAI)  Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC – IV)	98 <sup>th</sup> percentile score on GAI and verbal comprehension or perceptual reasoning on WISC-IV score in 98 <sup>th</sup> percentile

District School Board of Niagara. (2012); Halton District School Board. (2012); Simcoe County District School Board (2012); Toronto District School Board (2012)



## Appendix C

### Parental Satisfaction Survey

Parents of the gifted in Ontario

---

An investigation of parental satisfaction with the education of their gifted children

The purpose of this study is to explore the opinions that parents of gifted children have about their children's education and to determine whether there are any changes that they feel need to be made to improve education for gifted children within the Province of Ontario.

This research has the potential to benefit gifted children in the Province of Ontario. Findings from this study may result in improving the education that gifted children are offered.

You can withdraw from survey at any time by clicking on the "Discard Responses and Exit" button at the bottom of the page and your information will be erased.

Participants for this study must be the parent or legal guardian of a gifted child.

**PLEASE NOTE: If you are the parent or guardian for more than one gifted child, please fill out a separate survey for each child.**

By completing this survey and submitting your responses you are indicating consent for your data to be used confidentially in this research project.

Please also note that FluidSurveys was chosen for this project due to the software having strict protocols in regards to housing the electronic data within Canada.

**This research has been vetted and cleared by the Brock University Research Ethics Board (file #12-286 - ENGEMANN).**

**1. What is your child's gender?**

- Male
- Female

**2. What is the age of your child?****3. In which grade is your child currently enrolled?**

- Preschool
- Junior Kindergarten
- Senior Kindergarten
- Grade 1
- Grade 2
- Grade 3
- Grade 4
- Grade 5
- Grade 6
- Grade 7
- Grade 8
- Grade 9
- Grade 10
- Grade 11
- Grade 12
- Community College
- University
- Not currently enrolled in an educational institution
- Other, please specify... \_\_\_\_\_

**4. In which school board or private school is your child currently enrolled?**

Please indicate "Home Schooled" if not currently enrolled in a school board or private school.

**5. Has your child been formally identified as gifted by an Identification Placement Review Committee (IRPC)?**

- Yes
- No

**6. In which grade was your child formally identified as gifted?**

**7. Who initiated the process of identification within the school system?**

- Yourself
- Classroom Teacher
- Learning Resource/Educational Resource Teacher
- Principal
- Educational Psychologist
- Other, please specify... \_\_\_\_\_

**8. Which of the following provided useful information in the formal identification process of your child?**

Check all that apply

- Classroom Teacher
- Principal
- Learning/Educational Resource Teacher
- Gifted Resource Coordinator
- School Psychologist
- External Agency, please specify... \_\_\_\_\_
- Other, please specify... \_\_\_\_\_

**9. Did you feel that you, and your opinions, were valued in the formal identification process?**

- Yes
- No

**10. If you have further comments about the formal identification process for your child, please include them here.**

**11. Please describe your child's particular gifts, talents, and/or strengths.**

**12. Is your child currently enrolled in a gifted placement?**

- Yes
- No

**13. If not, why not?**

Check all that apply

- Prefer to have child in "regular" classroom
- Did not want child to leave established friendships
- Prefer to have child enrolled in French Immersion
- Attends another regional placement - i.e., arts, science, technology classes
- Too far away
- Receives challenge through extracurriculars
- Other, please specify... \_\_\_\_\_







**18. Do you have any specific comments about the gifted programming your child is receiving that you wish to add?**

**19. What are some of the positive aspects of the gifted placement for your child?**

**20. What are some of the negative aspects of the gifted placement for your child?**

**21. Overall, do you think that being enrolled in a gifted placement is a positive experience for your child?**

If not currently enrolled in a gifted placement, do you feel it could be a positive experience for your child?

- Yes
- No

**22. Does your school board or private school allow for acceleration as a method of gifted education?**

- Yes
- No
- Unsure/Don't know

**23. Would you allow your child to accelerate to a higher grade if offered by your school board?**

- Yes
- Yes but only for specific classes in which they accel (e.g. higher grade level Math or English)
- No



**24. Are there changes to gifted education that you would like to see implemented by your school board?**

**25. Where do you get information about gifted education?**

Please check all that apply.

- School Board
- Parent Associations
- Local Municipal Library
- Discussion Groups
- Online Forums
- Mensa
- Magazines (e.g., Today's Parent, MacLeans, etc.)
- Newspapers
- Internet Searches
- Other, please specify... \_\_\_\_\_

**26. Do you have any other comments?**

**27. Would you be willing to participate in further research?**

- Yes
- No

**If yes, and/or if interested in receiving information regarding the results of this study, then please enter your email address below.**

Email addresses will be kept strictly confidential and will only be used to inquire about participation in further research related to gifted education or to send information on the results of the study.