Using State District Program Plans to Analyze District Policies in Identifying and Delivering Services to Gifted Students

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Purpose of Study
Studies of the current state of program implementation in gifted education have relied on survey self-report data (Callahan, Moon, & Oh, 2013; CSDPG & NAGC, 2015)

In this study we attempted to address two shortcomings of this previous work:
1) the lack of complete pictures of the state of implementation because of limited survey responses, and
2) the lack of a theory of change to tie the findings to probability of success in bringing about maximum development of talent

Method

Sample/data sources
- All district program plans in two states
- Survey responses about practices in two states
- State 1, n = 115
- State 2, n = 178

Coding scheme development
- Iterative process, based on Theory of Change elements
- Final coding scheme consists of 133 total items

Inter-rater agreement
- Plans coded by nine-person coding team
- Every tenth plan coded by all nine team members
- Inter-rater agreement above 87% for all commonly scored district plans

Selected Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory of Change Element</th>
<th>Policy 1</th>
<th>Practice 1</th>
<th>Policy 2</th>
<th>Practice 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparation or Talent Development Program</td>
<td>82.6%</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
<td>03.0%</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher nominations/referral</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
<td>91.3%</td>
<td>59.6%</td>
<td>93.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability testing</td>
<td>92.2%</td>
<td>95.1%</td>
<td>70.8%</td>
<td>94.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement testing</td>
<td>97.4%</td>
<td>96.1%</td>
<td>68.0%</td>
<td>96.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal screening</td>
<td>74.8%</td>
<td>82.5%</td>
<td>58.4%</td>
<td>95.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occurs at specific grade level</td>
<td>79.1%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>59.6%</td>
<td>97.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection committee/study team</td>
<td>88.7%</td>
<td>63.1%</td>
<td>66.3%</td>
<td>75.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service delivery through use of pull-out classes</td>
<td>68.7%</td>
<td>74.2%</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceleration practices = district report</td>
<td>92.2%</td>
<td>90.3%</td>
<td>70.8%</td>
<td>93.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>~ school report</td>
<td>55.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td>64.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

- The states differ in district policies about talent development programs, yet both states reported similar program offerings in practice.
- Policies and practices in the following areas are in alignment with each other in State 1:
  - Ability testing
  - Achievement testing
- In both states, reported identification practices are aligned with the following Theory of Change elements:
  - Teacher nominations/referral
  - Universal screening
  - Selection committee/study team
- Despite district-level policy, reports about practice at the school-level indicate lack of acceleration implementation in ~50% of schools

Implications

- Future research should examine
  - whether and to what extent district policies are aligned with state policies.
  - whether and to what extent reported practices are aligned with program policies within and across each individual district.

References