

A Culturally Responsive Equity-Based Bill of Rights for Gifted Students of Color

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Abstract: This Bill of Rights for Gifted Students of Color was envisioned with the singular goal of effecting change based on equity and cultural responsiveness. The eight sections focus on fundamental issues representing removing barriers. Gifted students of color must have their gifts and talents recognized, affirmed, and developed as districts endeavor to recruit and retain them in gifted education.

Keywords: diversity, advocacy, gifted education, gifted students of color, Black, Hispanic, bill of rights

Each year, over 500,000 Black and Hispanic students lack access to gifted education services and programs (Ford, 2013). This Bill of Rights for Gifted Students of Color, grounded in equity and cultural responsiveness, is long overdue. Other Bill of Rights exist for gifted students (e.g., National Association for Gifted Students <http://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources-parents/gifted-childrens-bill-rights> and http://www.bertiekingore.com/readers_bill_of_rights.pdf). In the spirit of advocacy, accountability, and awareness, we felt an urgent need to tailor one to gifted students of color who are extensively underrepresented in gifted education, specifically Black and Hispanic students. This Bill of Rights was envisioned with the singular goal of effecting change based on equity *and* cultural responsiveness. Our

rationale is that gifted students of color have rights that must be heard, honored, and addressed. They have gifts and talents that must be recognized, affirmed, and developed as districts endeavor to recruit and retain them in gifted education.

“ THIS BILL OF RIGHTS SPECIFICALLY ASSERTS THAT CULTURALLY DIFFERENT FAMILIES MUST BE TRAINED AND FULLY EMPOWERED AND ENGAGED AS COLLABORATORS AND COPARTNERS IN THE EDUCATION OF THEIR GIFTED CHILDREN.”

Content of the Bill of Rights

The eight sections focus on fundamental issues representing barriers and promises to ensuring equity via a cultural framework. As justice-minded scholars, we are calling on leaders, administrators, policy makers, educators, counselors, school psychologists, teacher educators, and families and communities to recruit and retain students of color in gifted education. This Bill of Rights addresses advocacy, access, program evaluation, testing and assessment, educator training, curriculum, social and emotional development, and family and community empowerment.

Purpose and Utility

The Bill of Rights for Gifted Students of Color will be useful for educators, families and communities, curriculum development, and colleges and university faculty.

Educators

This tool will provide educators with a guide or checklist for gifted program evaluation and improvement. The services,

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policies and procedures, and tests and instruments pertaining to screening and identification should be evaluated with cultural and equitable lens. Educators might consider each right as a question to examine or critique the efficacy of gifted program services for children of color (Dickson, 2015). Educators might ask these questions: (a) How do policies and procedures and assessments contribute to underrepresentation? (b) When was the last time the district's gifted program and services were evaluated by an external and culturally competent program evaluator(s) with gifted education expertise? and (c) In what ways can the features and components of my program better reflect items in the Equity-Based Bill of Rights for Gifted Students of Color?

Families and Communities

Families and communities of color have been left out of gifted education advocacy discussions and advisory groups/committees (Davis, 2010). This document provides specific language to guide families of color as they seek support and increased access to gifted and advanced learner programs for their gifted children. This Bill of Rights specifically asserts that culturally different families must be trained and fully empowered and engaged as collaborators and copartners in the education of their gifted children. The role of parents and caregivers as first and forever educators cannot be overstated. This document provides an entry way for families of color to have their rights as families, extended family members, and community leaders to be respected and valued.

Curriculum Development

It is an unfortunate reality that multicultural curriculum and literature tend to lack rigor and authenticity (Ford, 2011; Scott, 2012). Students are relegated to learning about stereotypes and given misinformation. They learn about artifacts and events, rather than about people from different cultural, racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds. This unique Bill of Rights is a call to action for educators and decision makers to be culturally responsive—grounded with a keen sense of the power of education that is rigorous *and* relevant. Gifted students of color want, need, and deserve to see themselves mirrored in curriculum and literature. This has positive influences on their social and emotional needs and development, which includes racial identity and pride (Davis & Moore, 2016; Ford, 2010; Grantham et al., 2011).

College and University Faculty

Few colleges and universities offer courses, credentials, and degrees in gifted education (Grantham, Collins, & Dickson, 2014). Likewise, too few offer courses, credentials, and degrees in multicultural education (Ford, 2011). This Bill of Rights would be incomplete without attending to these voids. In higher education and professional development, we must commit to preparing gifted education teachers to be equity-minded *and* culturally responsive. We hope that faculty will share this document and

make changes to their courses, credentials, and degree programs with equity and cultural responsiveness deemed as fundamental. Equally important must be a commitment to diversify the teaching force in gifted education. All students are shortchanged by not having teachers/educators of color.

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The authors of this **Bill of Rights for Gifted Students of Color** have extensive experience and expertise in gifted education and multicultural education. We are leading Black scholars in gifted education with an individual and collective mission that is equity-oriented and multicultural/culturally responsive. We have written and provided mentoring, teaching, advising, leadership, and professional development in gifted education on behalf of gifted students of color at professional organizations around the world, such as the National Association for Gifted Children and Council for Exceptional Children—the leading U.S. organizations in both gifted education and special education, specifically subgroups devoted to equity, diversity, and inclusion. We have authored and published in gifted education and multicultural journals, books, and other scholarly, grassroots, and social media outlets. The sections are not mutually exclusive but, instead, represent a culturally and equity grounded holistic approach to do what is necessary to desegregate gifted education and advanced learner programs to support and advocate for students of color. We are honored to present this culturally responsive and equity driven Bill of Rights for gifted students of color.

Note. The term “educator” is used in the broadest and most comprehensive sense, which includes teachers, administrators, coordinators, counselors, school psychologists, and other professionals.

Advocacy and Accountability

Gifted students of color have

- The right to all gifted education policies and procedures grounded in equity and inclusion
- The right to an administrative structure committed to hiring and retaining gifted teachers of color

- The right to be served by educators devoted to recruiting and retaining students of color in gifted education programs
- The right to be served by educators committed to removing barriers to accessing gifted education services
- The right to state and district policies that require educators to be formally prepared/trained in gifted education
- The right to state and district policies that require educators to be formally trained in culturally relevant and rigorous curriculum and pedagogy
- The right to have gifted students of color communities fully engaged with educators in collaborative advocacy processes
- The right to a family and community advocacy group that represents their culture, background, and experiences
- The right to an administrative structure that seeks funding for gifted programs and services in all federally funded programs—particularly Title I, II, III, and IV
- The right to a guarantee that all equity data are inclusive of opportunities, access, and support within Consolidated States' plans. This includes the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plans (and future legislation), as well as state level equity plans

Access To Programming and Services

Gifted students of color have

- The right to participate in gifted education programs and services, including advanced placement, accelerated, magnet, early college, and other programs for advanced students/learners
- The right to equitable access to gifted education programs and services
- The right to access all district, regional, and state level services that nurture their giftedness across all domains and content areas
- The right to be served in their area(s) of gifts and talents
- The right to access gifted and talented before school, after school, Saturday morning, and summer programs
- The right to participate in college awareness and career development programs at institutions of higher education, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)
- The right to the development and implementation of general and gifted program policies that are equity-based
- The right to be assessed with tools and practices that reduce and/or eliminate bias in traditional assessment tools and practices
- The right to be assessed for gifted education potential even if they have been referred for and served in special education (i.e., thrice exceptional—students of color who have gifted and special education needs)
- The right to free or reduced fee gifted education programs and services

Gifted Program Evaluation and Accountability

Gifted students of color have

- The right to district, regional, and state program assessments conducted every 3 to 5 years by external and culturally competent program evaluators with gifted education expertise
- The right to annual reports to the community that reveal the “equity goal” for gifted education and all advanced programs and services
- The right to annual equity goals and objectives for district, regional, and state programs.
- The right to teachers who engage in continuous and systematic professional learning experiences in cultural competency and multicultural education
- The right to a program philosophy/mission/belief statement that explicitly addresses the needs of gifted students of color

Gifted Education Evaluation and Assessment

Gifted students of color have

- The right to a culturally, racially, and linguistically diverse/different gifted education assessment committee
- The right to general education, special education, preservice, and current professionals trained and dedicated to recognizing and valuing their expressions of gifts and talents
- The right to be evaluated and identified using multiple criteria
- The right to be evaluated in multimodal and multidimensional ways
- The right to be assessed with nonbiased tests and instruments for screening and identification
- The right to be assessed with nonverbal tests for screening and identification
- The right to be evaluated by bilingual test examiners (e.g., school psychologists)
- The right to be assessed by tests and instruments in their predominant or preferred language
- The right to be assessed by tests and instruments translated into their primary or preferred language
- The right to be assessed with culturally normed checklists
- The right to be evaluated with tools renormed to represent their cultural experiences and realities
- The right to be evaluated by tests and instruments normed on students of color for screening and identification
- The right to be assessed by tests and instructions normed locally
- The right to educators who adhere to official testing and assessment policies and procedures

Educators

Gifted students of color have

- The right to preservice and current educators who are unbiased and hold culturally responsive philosophies
- The right to preservice and current educators who are committed to becoming culturally competent
- The right to preservice and current educators who are committed to gifted education
- The right for preservice and current educators to be trained in multicultural education *and* gifted education
- The right to a racially diverse/different preservice and current gifted education teaching force
- The right to have access to preservice and current educators of color and members of their community who represent and can advocate for their interests, needs, and potential
- The right to preservice and current educators who have bilingual training and credentials

Curriculum and Instruction

Gifted students of color have

- The right to culturally relevant curriculum and instruction
- The right to authentic and multicultural content in all content areas
- The right to rigorous multicultural curriculum and materials that reflect their cultural, racial, and linguistic background and heritage
- The right to rigorous and authentic multicultural literature reflective of all cultures
- The right to curricula that promotes cultural, racial, and linguistic pride
- The right to their views being encouraged and honored rather than silenced
- The right to curricula that will prepare them to be globally competitive and knowledgeable of world cultures
- The right to program experiences that allow international travel and virtual engagement with their peers around the world

Social and Emotional

Gifted students of color have

- The right to supportive services and programs by school counselors trained in multicultural counseling (theories, methods, strategies)
- The right to counselors familiar with and skilled in racial identity theories
- The right to counselors who understand and promote racial identity development
- The right to counselors and teachers who understand the unique challenges of being a gifted student of color

- The right to preservice educators, current educators, and counselors formally trained in the socio-emotional needs of gifted children of color
- The right to counselors who understand the relationship between racial identity and achievement
- The right to interact and be educated with peers from similar cultural, racial, and linguistic backgrounds
- The right to academic support when they underachieve, fail, and/or make mistakes
- The right to understand the area(s) in which they are gifted and talented
- The right to be taught how to self-advocate to increase their access to appropriate instructional and support services

Families and Communities

Gifted students of color have

- The right to educators who value the importance of their families feeling welcome in schools
- The right to educators who collaborate with their families and communities
- The right to educators who provide professional development to families to strengthen advocacy for their children
- The right to have community leaders (e.g., faith leaders, community center leaders) who know and understand them in different contexts involved in the referral, identification and service delivery process
- The right to have their families assist others in the community with understanding the benefits of gifted education programs and services
- The right to have their families serve as “cultural agents” to inform educators and mediate the cultural mismatch that exists between their communities and dominant culture school personnel
- The right for schools to recruit and engage members of their communities who have been successful to serve in the critical role of mentoring
- The right for administrative structures to respect the norms, traditions and culture of communities of color when planning and conducting events



Conflict of Interest

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Bios

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