

# Peeling the Onion: Equity in Highly Capable (HiCap)

Austina De Bonte

President, NW Gifted Child Assoc.

President, Northshore HiCap Parents Council

# Agenda

- ▶ Current equity situation
- ▶ Identification
  - ▶ Outdated practices
  - ▶ What would be better
- ▶ Access to services
  - ▶ Outdated practices
  - ▶ What would be better
- ▶ Funding
- ▶ The root cause

# The Equity Problem - National



**SEE ME!**

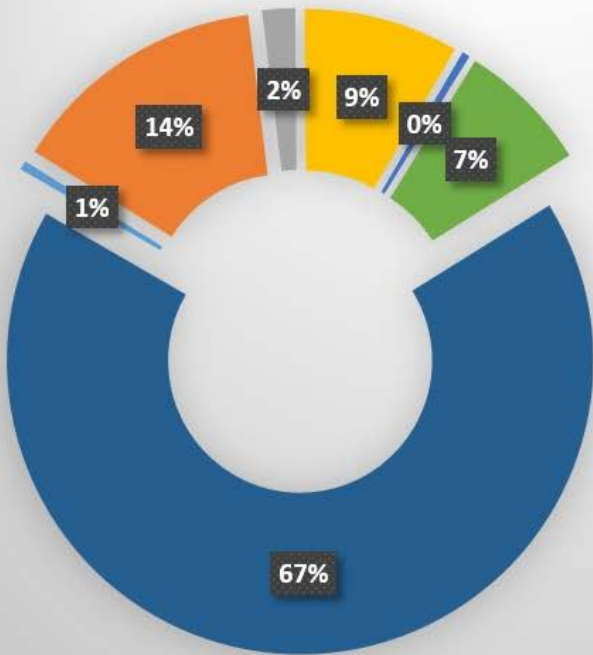
GIFTED CHILDREN IN POVERTY AND FROM MINORITY GROUPS ARE 2.5 TIMES LESS LIKELY TO BE IDENTIFIED FOR, AND IN, GIFTED AND TALENTED PROGRAMS IN SCHOOLS. CHILDREN DESERVE FAIR IDENTIFICATION STRATEGIES.



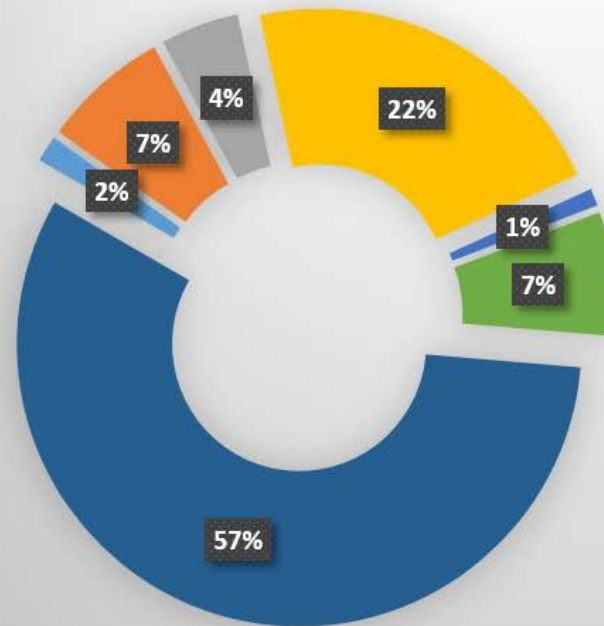
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR  
**Gifted Children**

# The Equity Problem – WA State

HiCap Student Pop.



District Student Pop.



- American Indian/Alaskan Native
- Asian
- Black/African American
- Hispanic/Latino of any race(s)
- Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
- Two or More Races
- White

OSPI data: <http://www.k12.wa.us/HighlyCapable/HiCapPLUS/DemographicsPieChart.xlsx>

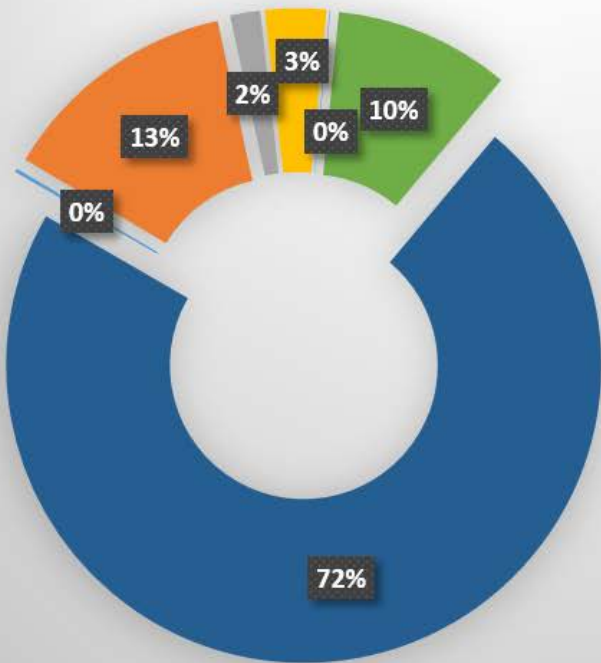
# The Equity Problem – WA State

	% of Statewide Enrollment	% of HiCap Enrollment
Free or Reduced Price Meals	45.0%	21.2%
Section 504	2.7%	3.7%
Special Education	13.4%	2.4%

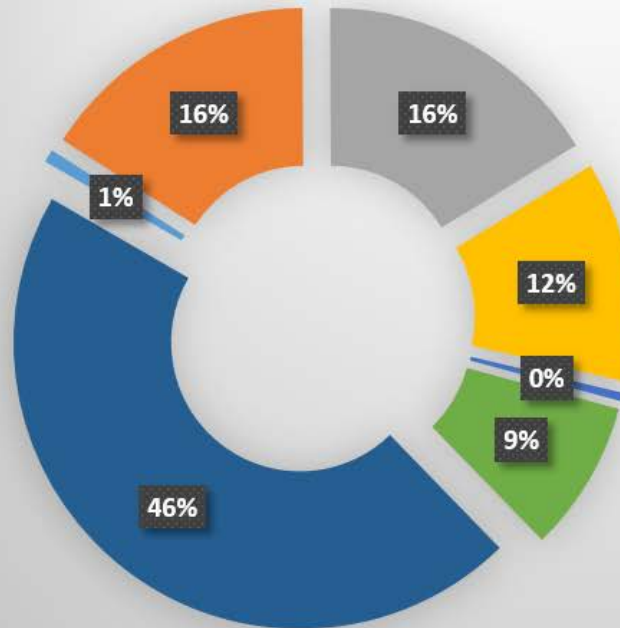
OSPI data: <http://www.k12.wa.us/HighlyCapable/HiCapPLUS/2014-15StudentReport.xlsx>

# The Equity Problem - Seattle

HiCap Student Pop.



District Student Pop.

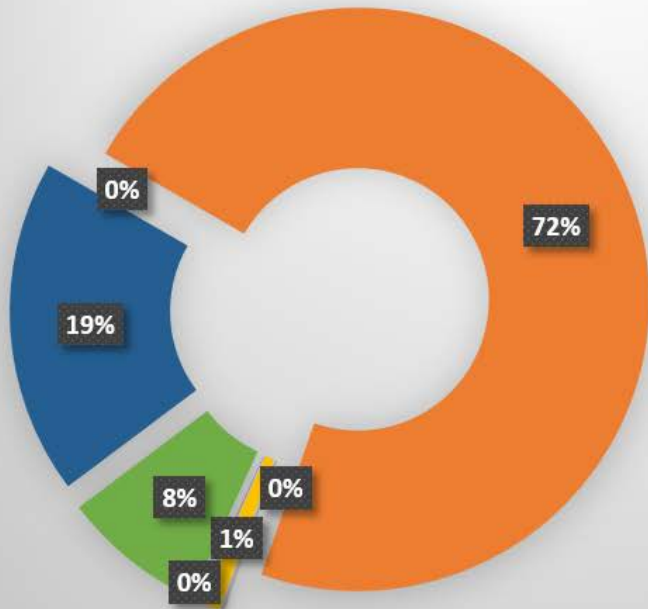


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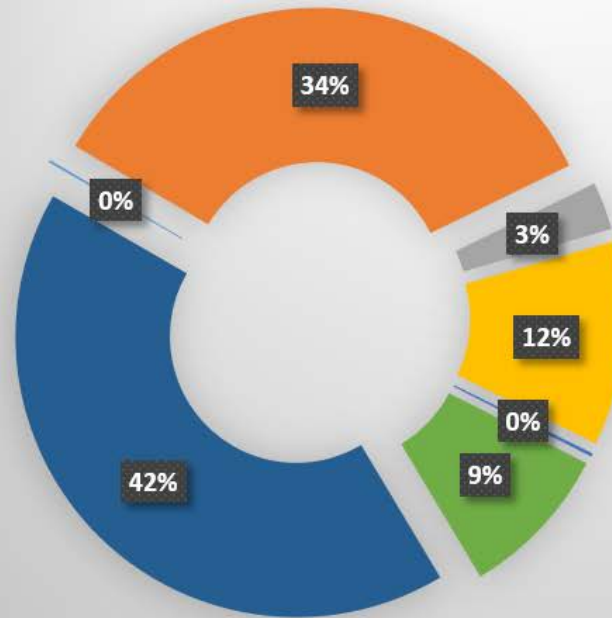
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# Across the lake: Bellevue

HiCap Student Pop.



District Student Pop.

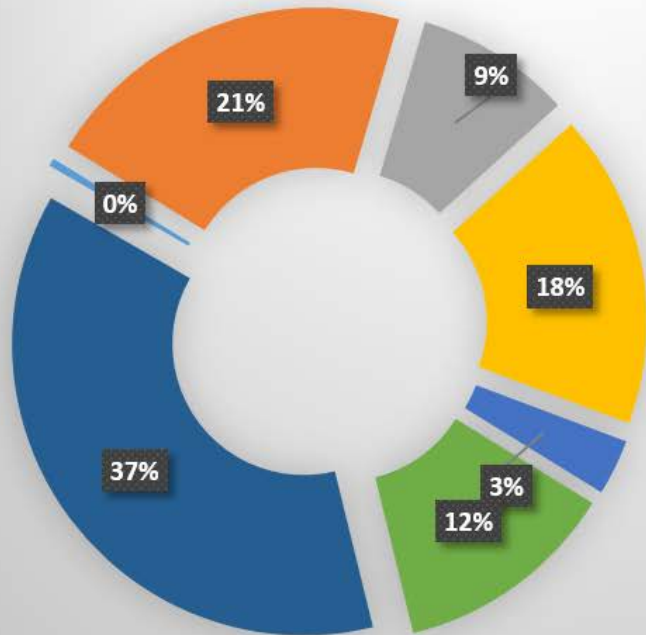


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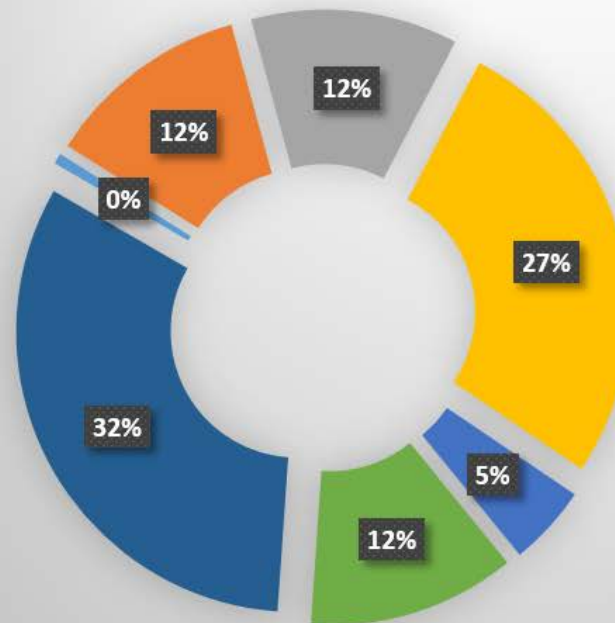
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# A ray of hope: Federal Way

HiCap Student Pop.



District Student Pop.



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OSPI data: <http://www.k12.wa.us/HighlyCapable/HiCapPLUS/DemographicsPieChart.xlsx>



# What is Federal Way Doing Differently?

- ▶ Universal screening in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade in all schools
- ▶ District data-sweep (and call downs)
- ▶ Several years of investment in more rigorous curriculum - elementary through high school
  - ▶ And learning from some false starts...

Equity: A complex problem with many layers...



# 1<sup>st</sup> Layer: Outdated, biased identification practices





# Identification Practices

## Outdated Practices

- ▶ Relying on parents, community members and/or teachers to nominate students for testing
- ▶ Using the words "Nominate" or "Application"

## What Would Be Better...

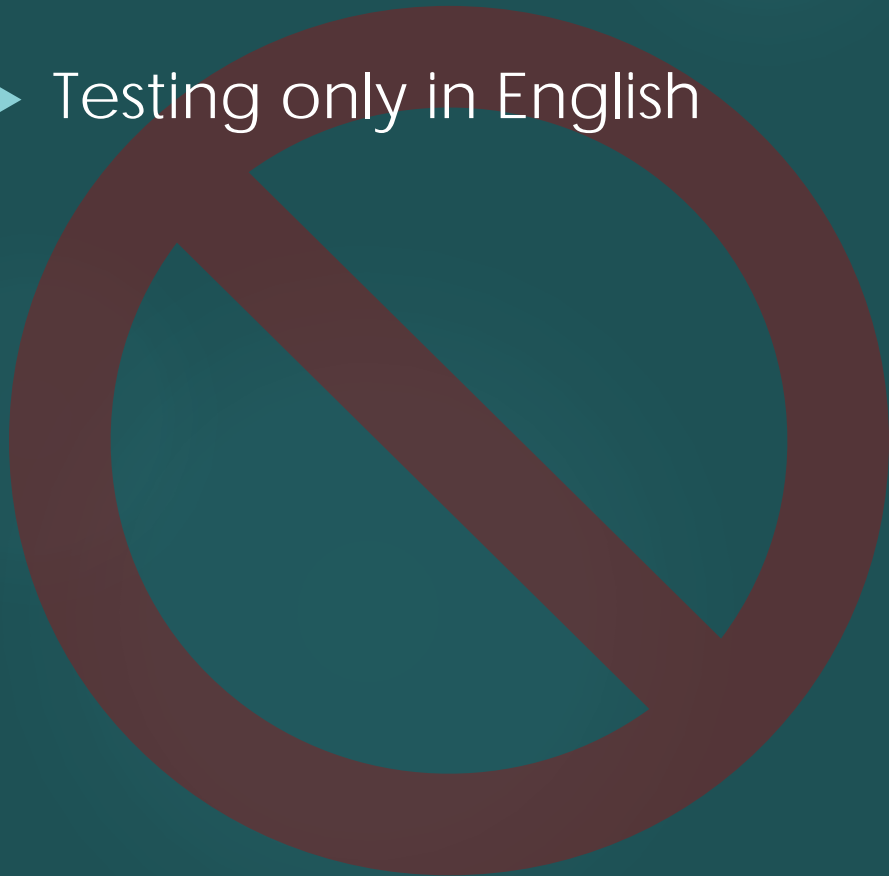
- ▶ Universal screening ALL students in a grade level
- ▶ District "data sweep"
- ▶ Referrals are the backup plan
- ▶ Example: Federal Way
- ▶ Use value-neutral language: "Refer" and "Referral"



# Identification Practices

## Outdated Practices

- ▶ Testing only in English



## What Would Be Better...

- ▶ Administer screener & tests in student's native language
- ▶ Consider fast rate of language acquisition as a valid HiCap identifier for ELL students



# Identification Practices

## Outdated Practices

- ▶ Conducting HiCap testing as a “special event” - outside of the student’s home school, in large sessions on Saturdays, or after school hours

## What Would Be Better...

- ▶ Conduct HiCap screening and testing during the school day, in the student’s home school.



# Identification Practices

## Outdated Practices

- ▶ Using Group-administered cognitive & achievement tests

## What Would Be Better...

- ▶ Administer one-on-one whenever there is reason to believe a student might need it  
  
(not just for IEPs/504s)
- ▶ Example: Highline SD



# Identification Practices

## Outdated Practices

- ▶ Waiting until 2<sup>nd</sup> grade to “really” identify HiCap students

## What Would Be Better...

- ▶ Prioritize identifying in Kindergarten and 1st grade to minimize further widening of the opportunity gap.
- ▶ Use performance-based assessments as a data point





# Identification Practices

## Outdated Practices

- ▶ Having hard cut-off scores, matrixes, or entrance criteria for HiCap programs
- ▶ Using high grades as HiCap entrance criteria
- ▶ Relying on appeals to catch mistakes in the identification process

## What Would Be Better...

- ▶ Use a portfolio-based approach, using diverse types of data points and professional judgment.
- ▶ Both age-normed and grade-normed scores.
- ▶ Normalize known biases in the tests being used.
- ▶ Proactively gather more data when a student has ambiguous scores. Do not rely on parents to appeal.



# Identification Practices

## Outdated Practices

- ▶ Once-a-year testing process, with no leniency for missing deadlines.

## What Would Be Better...

- ▶ Allow students to be nominated at any time of year, and have a process for rolling admissions.

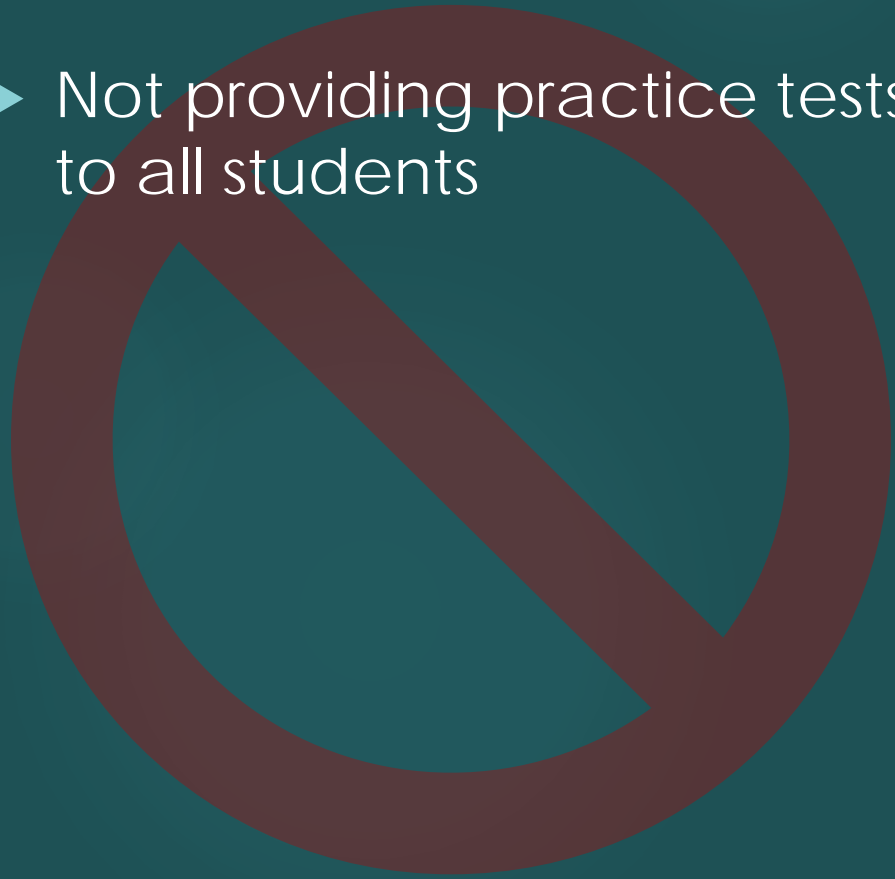


# Identification Practices

## Outdated Practices

## What Would Be Better...

- ▶ Not providing practice tests to all students



- ▶ Have ALL students do a guided practice test before being screened or assessed.



# Identification Practices

## Outdated Practices

- ▶ “Public notice” style of communication about the Highly Capable program

## What Would Be Better...

- ▶ Provide community-specific communication to respect both language and cultural norms.
- ▶ Advertise the program proactively.
- ▶ Help families understand the benefits of HiCap programs so that they actually accept HiCap placement.



# Identification Practices

## Outdated Practices

- ▶ Multi-disciplinary selection committees that do not reflect the district population, and do not have HiCap subject matter expertise

## What Would Be Better...

- ▶ Members of the committee should represent the district population in gender, race, and ethnicity.
- ▶ All members of the committee must have sufficient expertise about HiCap and Twice Exceptional students, and be up-to-date on the best practices for identification.



# Identification Practices

## Outdated Practices

- ▶ Qualifying HiCap students based on available space

## What Would Be Better...

- ▶ Create HiCap program space for every qualified student.

We shouldn't be that surprised...

Our identification processes favor families who can navigate a complex system.

That is exactly who we see reflected in our HiCap programs.

2<sup>nd</sup> Layer: Even if identification was perfect, equity of access...







# Access to Services

## Outdated Practices

- ▶ Not providing transportation, or only providing limited transportation, such as with a shuttle and hubs.

## What Would Be Better...

- ▶ Provide full transportation to all students.



# Access to Services

## Outdated Practices

- ▶ Being the only student of color, or one of very few girls in a HiCap classroom.

## What Would Be Better...

- ▶ Schedule a big campaign for outreach and identification in an ethnic/racial/gender group all at once. Place cluster groups together.
- ▶ Only by identifying and placing a group of HiCap students of color together can we satisfy these students' dual needs for community and acceptance.



# Access to Services

## Outdated Practices

- ▶ Teachers assigned to work with HiCap students, with little or no training about the unique needs of HiCap students

## What Would Be Better...

- ▶ Provide baseline HiCap professional development for all building staff.
- ▶ Provide detailed HiCap professional development for all classroom HiCap teachers.



# Access to Services

## Outdated Practices

- ▶ HiCap teachers and curriculum do not reflect the demographics of the student population

## What Would Be Better...

- ▶ HiCap teachers and curriculum should reflect the demographics of the students.
- ▶ All teachers, including HiCap teachers, must be trained in cultural competency.



# Access to Services

## Outdated Practices

- ▶ Assuming that all students have access to technology after school for homework
- ▶ Assuming that all students have access to homework help & executive function support

## What Would Be Better...

- ▶ Provide technology to low-income students, or ensure that teachers do not expect access to technology for homework.
- ▶ Teachers must be extra supportive of executive function for HiCap students, all the way through middle school.

# 3<sup>rd</sup> Layer: Districts need Funding to Implement Better Practices





# State HiCap Funding

- ▶ State funding only covers 15 to 20% of districts' actual cost of running their highly capable programs
- ▶ State funds ~25,000 HiCap students
  - ▶ 63,551 HiCap students being served today
- ▶ HiCap is an unfunded (or severely underfunded) mandate
  - ▶ Not unlike Special Education
- ▶ Part of McCleary, but habitually left out
- ▶ Districts are in a tight spot



# State HiCap Funding

- ▶ HiCap funding is used for:
  - ▶ Identification
  - ▶ Professional Development
- ▶ NOT: Staff, Transportation, Curriculum (usually)
- ▶ Good practices cost more
- ▶ **UNDER-FUNDING HiCap is DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR EQUITY PROBLEM**



4<sup>th</sup> Layer: Why should we spend money serving HiCap kids?



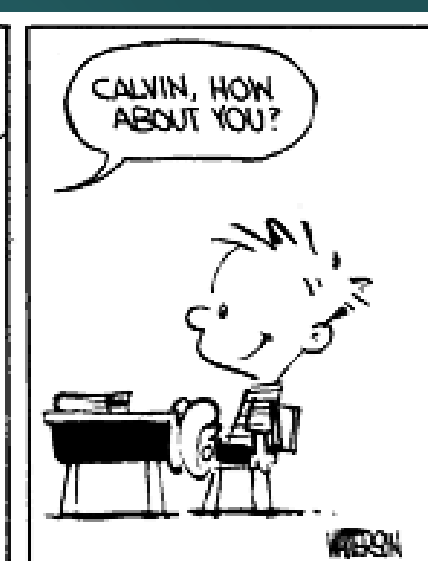
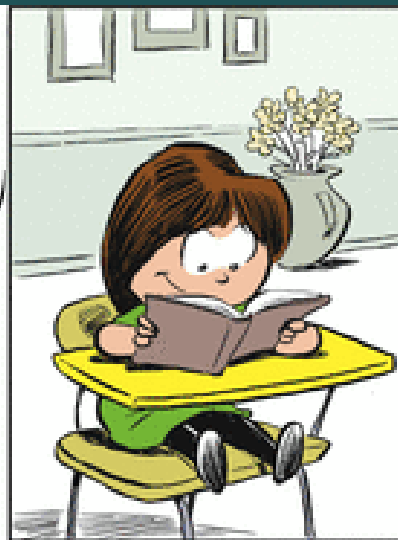


# Why do we serve HiCap kids anyway?

- ▶ Too hard of a problem to solve?
  - ▶ Yes, it is a hard problem
  - ▶ But, it's the law
    - ▶ Districts must identify K-12
  - ▶ And it is an essential intervention for a special needs population



# Who are HiCap Kids?



www.Facebook.com/BaldoComics • www.GeComics.com/Baldo

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# Is it OK for school to be easy?

- ▶ If a child is allowed to “skate” through regular classrooms where they pick up the new ideas seemingly without trying, they never learn how to tackle a genuinely hard problem.
- ▶ Eventually, they find themselves in middle school geometry, or high school physics, and are faced for the very first time with a topic that is not intuitive for them—and have no experience, no strategies, and limited emotional reserves to tackle it.

(Dweck 2007, Cross 2002)



# Grit is more important than IQ

- ▶ Duckworth & Seligman studied success at:
  - ▶ West Point Military Academy
  - ▶ National Spelling Bee
  - ▶ Adolescents: High school juniors, 8<sup>th</sup> graders
- ▶ "It wasn't social intelligence. It wasn't good looks, physical health, and it wasn't IQ. It was *grit*."
- ▶ "Self-discipline predicted academic performance more robustly than did IQ."
- ▶ **"In our data, grit is usually unrelated or even inversely related to measures of talent."**

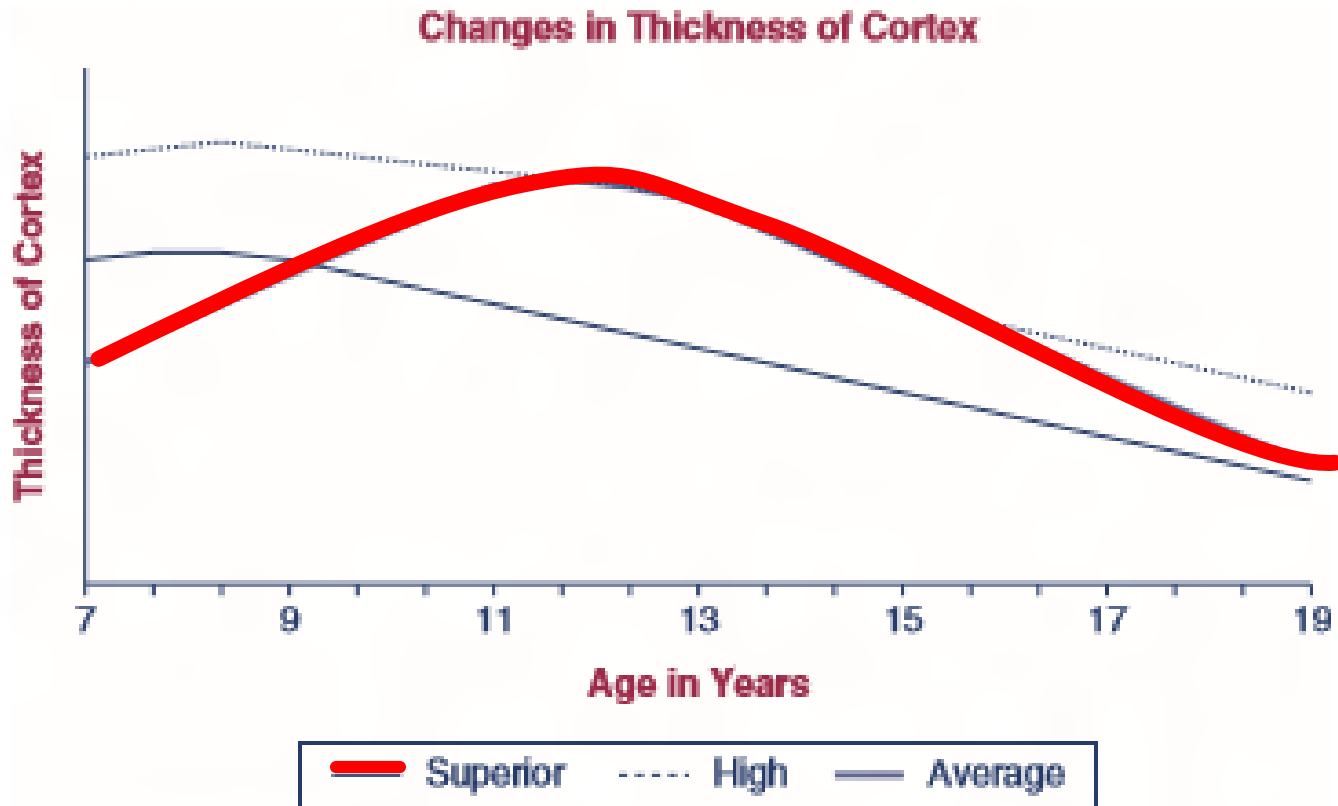


# Underachievement

- ▶ Has its roots in 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade
  - ▶ But often isn't visible until middle or high school
- ▶ Kids may never have to develop:
  - ▶ How to handle a real challenge
  - ▶ Persistence, perseverance, "grit"
  - ▶ Emotional coping skills
  - ▶ Study skills, time management skills
- ▶ Learning disabilities may be hidden until the material gets challenging enough
- ▶ **Underachievement – very difficult to reverse**  
<http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/underachievement.htm>



# A different developmental timetable



**Figure 1.2** Changes in the thickness of the brain's cortex between the ages of 7 and 19 in individuals of superior, high, and average intelligence.

Source: Adapted from Shaw et al., 2006.



# Empirical evidence agrees...

“ Kids who had higher IQs to begin with seemed to have an extended period in adolescence during which they retained the ability to learn at a rapid pace, just like much younger children.”

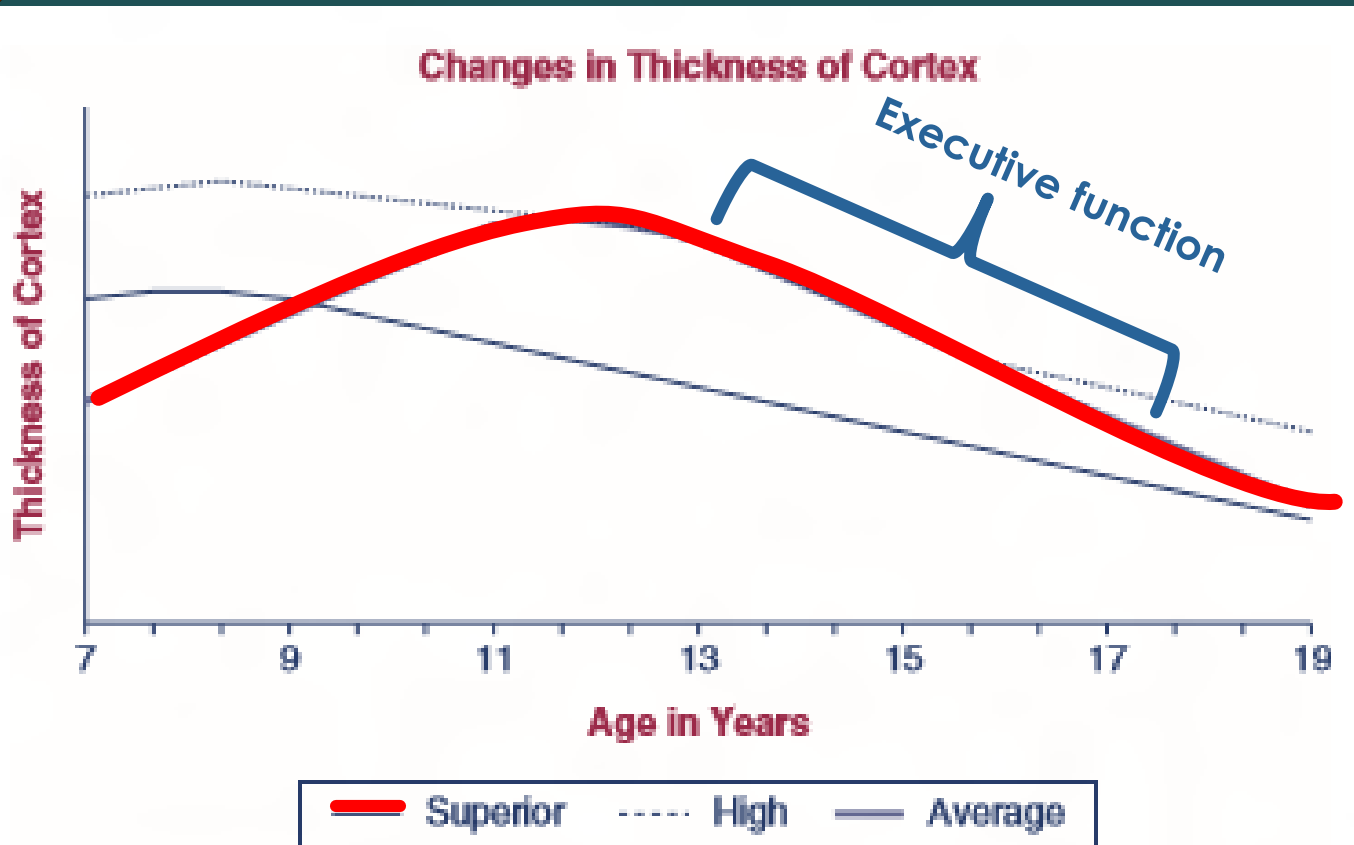
Angela Brant & John Hewitt, Institute for Behavioral Genetics at the University of Colorado

<http://www.npr.org/blogs/health/2013/09/23/224387862/smart-teenage-brains-may-get-some-extra-learning-time>





# A different developmental timetable



**Figure 1.2** Changes in the thickness of the brain's cortex between the ages of 7 and 19 in individuals of superior, high, and average intelligence.

Source: Adapted from Shaw et al., 2006.



# Intensity, Sensitivity

- ▶ Over-excitabilities (OEs) – super-stimulatability
  - ▶ Psychomotor
  - ▶ Sensual
  - ▶ Imaginational
  - ▶ Intellectual
  - ▶ Emotional
- ▶ Hard wired - fMRI shows “Brains on Fire”
  - ▶ Experience a more intense reaction
  - ▶ For a longer period than normal
  - ▶ To a stimulus that may be very small



# Perfectionism

- ▶ Erase a hole in the paper
- ▶ Impatient with others, aren't "doing it right"
- ▶ Meltdown at the first sign of trouble
- ▶ Can't make a decision
- ▶ Reach for impossible goals
- ▶ Hate criticism, dwell on mistakes
- ▶ Trouble accepting compliments
- ▶ Unwilling to start, afraid to try, "I don't want to"
- ▶ "Challenge Cards" in the corner of the classroom may not work...



# Social mismatch

- ▶ More complex vocabulary
- ▶ More involved games, stricter rules, fairness
- ▶ Interested in niche topics, ask unusual questions
- ▶ Kids realize very early
  - ▶ They are somehow *different*
- ▶ Gravitate to older kids or adults
- ▶ Feel like they have to “fake it” to make a friend
- ▶ Lonely, social isolation
  - ▶ Even if they have playmates
  - ▶ “No one understands me” “They don’t get my jokes”



# When the school doesn't fit...

- ▶ Constantly ask probing or off-topic questions
  - ▶ Annoy teacher & other kids
- ▶ Trouble socializing with other kids
- ▶ Dumb themselves down to “fit in”
  - ▶ Consciously or subconsciously
  - ▶ Particularly gifted girls going “underground”
- ▶ Increasingly introverted
- ▶ Become the class clown
  - ▶ Or the dreamer, the loner, or the victim...
  - ▶ Or the A+ student!



# HiCap programs help socially

HiCap children have better social adjustment in classes with children like themselves.

The brighter the child, the lower his or her social self-concept is likely to be in the regular classroom.

Social self-concept improves when children are placed with cognitive peers in special classes.

<http://www.gifteddevelopment.com/articles/what-we-have-learned-about-gifted-children>



# HiCap programs help emotionally

It's not uncommon for a HiCap kid to cry in class over a frustration – even in 6<sup>th</sup> grade

... in a typical classroom, this can be socially limiting

... in a HiCap classroom, this is par for the course

Grouping HiCap kids together helps normalize their emotional challenges, OEs, perfectionism

... in a typical classroom, they feel different, their challenges can become pathologized



# Why not put one HiCap kid in each classroom? Doesn't that help other kids?

- ▶ HiCap kids are NOT role models
- ▶ When other kids look at the natural abilities of HiCap students, they only get discouraged that there's no way they could possibly "catch up."
- ▶ When HiCap learners are removed from the classroom, other bright kids step up and become more meaningful classroom leaders.

(Delisle & Galbraith, 2003; Winebrenner and Devlin, 2001; Shunk 1998)





# Won't kids get arrogant if they are put in a HiCap program?

Actually, when kids are among true peers they are no longer the smartest kid in the room

- ▶ Humble
- ▶ Get challenged by peers
- ▶ Develop true self-confidence, self-reliance

Kids realized they were different in preschool or kindergarten...they already know.



Bottom line...

Smart is NOT Easy

Emotionally – Socially – Academically

Grit – Executive Function



# Why do we serve HiCap kids?

- ▶ They are a special needs population
- ▶ Without intervention they are at risk
- ▶ Nurturing the WHOLE CHILD
  
- ▶ NOT:
  - ▶ To create eminent leaders (Einstein, Steve Jobs, ...)
  - ▶ To send more kids to Harvard, Stanford, MIT...
  - ▶ To nurture child prodigies
  - ▶ To increase our international math ranking
  - ▶ To improve the US economy



HiCap is not a prize, it's a **WHOLE CHILD** intervention

We have a moral duty to identify **EVERY** HiCap student

Our most vulnerable populations need it the most

**This is a social justice issue**



“When provisions are denied to the gifted on the basis that they are “elitist,” it is the poor who suffer the most. The rich have other options.”

– Dr. Linda Silverman