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**Giftedness in Young Children: What Do Parents and Teachers Know?**

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EDCI 590: Individual Research

Dr. Nancy Guth

November 22, 2020

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy Guth". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

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Signature of Project Advisor

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### **Abstract**

Past research has explored how young children express giftedness as well as how parents and teachers can best meet the needs of these children once they have been identified. However, there is a distinct lack of literature on what parents and teachers actually know about how giftedness manifests in the youngest learners. This research investigates the background knowledge that teachers and parents of preschoolers hold on the notion of giftedness. Parents and teachers of young children were surveyed using online survey software by contacting a diverse set of private preschools within the Northern Virginia area. Parents and teachers at those schools responded to the survey. This research shows that parents and teachers are able to recognize gifted traits when they are presented in a stereotypical way, but lack the insight to recognize “negative” traits or asynchronous development. Implications for further research are discussed, as well as the possibility of providing literature to preschools that will help broaden the information base of parents and teachers about giftedness in young children.

*Keywords:* gifted, young children, preschool, gifted traits, teacher training, parent and teacher understanding

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### **Giftedness in Young Children: What Do Parents and Teachers Know?**

The purpose of this research is to investigate the knowledge parents and teachers of preschoolers have of giftedness in young children, including their ability to recognize gifted characteristics in their children or students and what steps they would take to educate a young gifted child.

#### **Problem Statement**

Past research has explored how young children express giftedness (Gross, 1999; Hodge & Kemp, 2000; Pfeiffer & Petscher, 2008) as well as how parents and teachers can best meet the needs of these children once they have been identified (Kitano, 1982; Walker, Hafenstein & Crow-Enslow, 1999; Cukierkorn, Karnes & Manning, 2007). However, there is a distinct lack of literature on what parents and teachers actually know about how giftedness manifests in the youngest learners.

In contrast, parents and teachers are often on high alert for behaviors and academic qualities in relation to other potential exceptionalities. Research has shown that, about 70% of the time, parents can accurately identify concerns related to speech, motor, and cognitive delays (Glascoe, 1997), and teachers receive extensive schooling and training to recognize students with potential delays. While there is evidence that the same is true for parents of young gifted children (Louis & Lewis, 1992), we do not see proportionate numbers of young children formally identified as gifted. Ideally, parents and preschool educators should be as attuned to the possibility of giftedness in young children as they are to the possibility of delays or special needs like ADHD and Autism Spectrum Disorders. However, this is impossible if they do not know what to look for.

**Rationale**

As the focus of education continues to veer heavily towards testing and test scores, many gifted programs across the country are severely lacking in support and resources, with less than 1% of the federal education budget allocated for gifted education and more emphasis than ever being placed on students who are underperforming rather than overperforming (VanTassel-Baska, 2006). And while elementary, middle, and high school teachers can still recommend students for gifted identification, they do not often know what traits gifted students exhibit.

In Virginia, general education teachers are not required to receive training on gifted individuals after they have obtained their initial licensure (National Association for Gifted Children, n.d.). This means that the burden for gifted identification lies with families, primarily parents or guardians. It has also been shown that when exceptionalities are identified at a younger age, those children are able to receive appropriate services earlier, and consequently have more success than if they had been identified later (Sonnander, 2000).

Thus, if we want to assure the success of gifted students, research suggests that we need to identify them as soon as we can (Karnes & Johnson, 1991). In other words, in their very first school experiences, by parents and/or teachers that spend a vast majority of the day with these children. In addition, many preschool teachers hold a Child Development Achievement (CDA), Associate's Degree, or a degree in an area unrelated to early childhood education. These programs would not prepare them to identify giftedness and in fact, giftedness might never be mentioned.

**Goals and Contributions**

This research will help to uncover if there is, in fact, a paucity of knowledge on young gifted individuals by surveying preschool teachers and parents of preschoolers about their knowledge of characteristics of giftedness as they are expressed in young children. If the knowledge is not there, many gifted learners might be overlooked because they are not identified before being passed into schools that do not have the resources or ability to recognize them. Furthermore, even if these children are later identified as gifted, they have missed out on potentially years of appropriate education. If educators can start accommodating a student's giftedness before they enter formal schooling, they have increased their likelihood of achievement from almost the earliest possible opportunity, assuring a brighter future. Based on the outcome of this research, recommendations are made for how to address the lack of knowledge in preschool teachers and parents through professional development or informational materials.

### **Evidence and Significance**

Based on research regarding the importance of recognizing student exceptionalities, it is clear that early intervention matters (Gross, 1999; Hoctor, 2013; Karnes & Johnson, 1991; Sonnander, 2000). The U.S. Government recognized the importance of early education in 1964, when the Head Start Program was introduced to provide education opportunities to low-income families that might not otherwise be able to access them. President Obama affirmed this view of the importance of early childhood education with his proposed Preschool for All Initiative, which would expand access to high-quality preschool for low-, moderate-, and middle-income families (Slack, 2013). However, these programs tend to focus on children who are disadvantaged or at-risk for exceptionalities like cognitive and speech delays, but children

who are gifted are also considered exceptional. And gifted young children face challenges similar to those with deficit-based exceptionalities: if their talents are not identified and developed while young, they have been shown to develop negative outcomes in cognitive, academic, social, and affective development in later years (Neihart, Reis, Robinson, & Moon, 2002, as cited in Moon & Brighton, 2008, p. 449). If early education programs truly want to prepare all children for academic success, they must indeed serve all children.

The difficulty comes in recognizing young gifted children. While there are reliable and valid tests to determine giftedness in preschoolers, they are not commonly used in typical programs. This leaves the identification process to the observations of teachers and parents. Many preschool teachers do not have the appropriate knowledge and training that would allow them to identify traits that suggest giftedness, and parents, while they might speculate about traits their children exhibit, are able to verify signs of giftedness only “[w]hen provided with a framework of characteristics with which to evaluate their children” (Silverman, Chitwood, & Waters, 1986, p.35), but it is not a common practice among preschools to hand out literature on giftedness. The problem then becomes that many gifted preschoolers are overlooked and unidentified because their caregivers are potentially unaware of their abilities.

This is significant to the field of education because teachers are expected to reach each child at their own level, instructing them to be valuable contributors to society. If a gifted child enters school but has not been previously identified as gifted, it is possible they could slip through the cracks, lose their gifted potential, and become underachieving not just academically but socially and emotionally as well (Gross, 1999). Understanding what parents and teachers of young children know about giftedness provides information that can be used in

the development of materials and trainings that help them to recognize those children's potential at the earliest opportunity. In this way, we can assure the life-long success of every child.

### **Definitions**

For the purposes of this research, the terms *young child(ren)* and *preschooler* will be used interchangeably to refer to a child between the ages of three and five years old that has not yet entered a public or private elementary school. *Guardians* are any adult that the child lives with, either part- or full-time, and has primary caretaking responsibilities. This could include mother, father, grandparent, or other legally appointed guardian. The National Associate for Gifted Children (2019) defines gifted children as those who "...perform—or have the capability to perform—at higher levels compared to others of the same age, experience, and environment in one or more domains. They require modification(s) to their educational experience(s) to learn and realize their potential." (p. 1).

### **Literature Review**

While literature on young gifted individuals has been available for decades, it has been primarily focused on how those already in the gifted education world can identify them and giving recommendations for teaching gifted preschoolers (Cukierkorn, Karnes, Manning, Houston, & Besnoy, 2007; Gross, 1999; Kettler & Bower, 2017; Kitano, 1982, 1989, 1990; Lee, 1999). The handful of articles that have been published on young gifted children within the last decade are often focused solely on developing programs for the already identified or lamenting the ways in which programming has failed gifted preschool students (Kaplan & Hertzog, 2016; Kettler, Oveross & Salman, 2017; Walsh, Hodge, Bowes, & Kemp, 2010; Wellisch, 2019). There

is little research available that is both up-to-date and relevant when it comes to what teachers and parents know about giftedness in their young children. Following, this research will review the literature available regarding gifted preschoolers, focusing on three main categories:

- a) Traits of the gifted preschooler,
- b) identifying the gifted preschooler, and
- c) strategies for reaching the gifted preschooler in the classroom setting.

### **Traits of the Gifted Preschooler**

*“In young children, it is the evidence of **promise** of developing abilities that tips us off.”*

*(Koshy & Robinson, 2006, p. 114)*

Many lists have been developed over the years to illuminate the traits of gifted young children, often borrowing from and building on one another. But when discussing the traits of young gifted learners, indeed any gifted individual, it is important to remember that because each child is unique, characteristics can be displayed in a variety of ways. In particularly young children, this is especially true because, as Koshy and Robinson (2006) remind us above, we are often alerted to burgeoning giftedness because of potential that is present rather than a specifically observable, concrete set of traits. A child may not be able to read *War and Peace*, but can already read at a second grade level in preschool. This ability should be enough to signal a deeper investigation into their potential giftedness.

It is therefore of the utmost importance, Wolfle (1990) reminds us, that to guarantee accurate identification we need to look at the behaviors of a child over a period of time, instead of a single observation. Children, especially those in preschool, can change day to day depending on a huge variety circumstances: their sleep, diet, health, mood, interactions with

peers, home life, relationship with the teacher, and more. A one-time observation of a behavior or trait that may lead one to suspect giftedness could just as easily have been a fluke as actual giftedness. Likewise, a gifted child might not display their abilities to the fullest on any single day because of any of these factors. The presence of developmental asynchrony or negatively perceived traits, which will be discussed later in this section, can also affect a child's behavior and the observer's perception of giftedness. Looking at a child's behaviors and abilities over time allows us to collect more, and more accurate, information about their talents.

Following is a table that lists frequently observed traits of young gifted children. Not all children who demonstrate the following abilities are necessarily gifted, but whether they are expressed the same way or not, most gifted preschoolers will have many of these traits in common. It is only when these skills and abilities appear when the child is very young or when many of these traits are noted concurrently that they should be linked to the possibility of giftedness (Gross, 1999). Because gifted individuals can exhibit such a vast array of traits, and in the interest of space, the ten most common have been chosen for each category.

Table 1

*Common Traits of Young Gifted Children*

<p><b>Intellectual/academic</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advanced vocabulary in comparison to age, early language development</li> <li>• Early interest in and ability related to letters, numbers, clocks, calendars, puzzles, and reading</li> <li>• Unusual memory or thinking abilities</li> <li>• Advanced problem-solving ability</li> <li>• Rapid acquisition and retention of new information and/or skills</li> <li>• Highly curious</li> <li>• Longer than expected attention span</li> <li>• In-depth interests or collections in which they will have advanced knowledge and know “everything”</li> <li>• Preference for new or challenging experiences and information</li> <li>• Self-motivated</li> </ul>
<p><b>Socio-emotional</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy, natural interaction with other children and adults</li> <li>• Adapts easily to new situations</li> <li>• Mature sense of humor in comparison to their age</li> <li>• Unusual imagination: telling stories, acting out plays, and drawing complicated pictures</li> <li>• Deeply sensitive to the feelings and thoughts of others</li> <li>• Powerful sense of justice</li> <li>• Deep understanding of events</li> <li>• Can develop fears like those of older children, and are more disturbed by them</li> <li>• Perfectionism, both in play and academic settings</li> <li>• Seek friends of a more mature nature or younger peers that will do their bidding</li> </ul>
<p><b>Creative</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creates original tunes</li> <li>• Advanced degree of tonal memory</li> <li>• Ability to easily repeat a rhythmic pattern</li> <li>• Distinguishes between tones, melodies, or rhythms without difficulty</li> <li>• Fills their extra time with artistic activities like drawing and painting, in which they depict a variety of things</li> <li>• Show a heightened degree of planning in composing their artwork</li> <li>• Desire to be independent and do things their own way</li> <li>• Potential preference to work alone</li> <li>• Ability to produce original ideas and/or think of many ways to reach a goal</li> <li>• Wanting to experiment with whatever materials are at hand</li> </ul>
<p><b>Kinesthetic</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High activity levels (not being able to sit still, having too much energy)</li> <li>• Early grasp of complex motor patterns</li> <li>• Sleep problems like difficulty falling or staying asleep, or need very little sleep in comparison to peers</li> </ul>
<p><i>Note.</i> Generated from Kettler &amp; Bower (2017), Kitano (1982, 1989, 1990), Koshy &amp; Robinson (2006), and Hodge &amp; Kemp (2000).</p>

Intellectual and academic traits are those that many most commonly associate with giftedness, but it is important to appreciate that intellectual ability is only one, albeit the most acknowledged, area of giftedness. It may be that intellectual giftedness is the easiest understood by the typical parent or educator, but characteristics encompassing the whole child are just as important, if not more so, in recognizing and supporting the judgement of giftedness in preschoolers. It is also important to note that children may be gifted in one or more domains, and because they exhibit characteristics in only one domain (for example, creative ability), this does not negate their giftedness, but merely supports the need for concentrated development of and attention to these gifts.

#### **Asynchronous development and “negative” traits**

Kitano (1990, in Pardeck & Murphy (Eds.)) tells us that while many gifted children are high achievers and what some would call model students, they can also show a total disinterest in school, group tasks, and academic pursuits. These “negative” traits, those that seem to be completely opposite of the stereotypical gifted child, can lead many educators and parents to dismiss giftedness as a possibility because these traits are seen as undesirable. Other perceived negative traits that gifted preschoolers can display are a dislike for repetition and impatience with the regular curriculum, difficult relationships with same age peers of lower ability, difficulty conforming to group tasks, and a heightened vulnerability to criticism (Kitano, 1989). These may manifest as decreases in classroom contributions, disruptive behavior, social isolation, refusal to join group activities, and the hiding of talents so as not to appear as a show-off (Kitano, 1989). Young gifted children also tend to ask a lot of questions and will often

respond to adults with unexpected or smart-aleck answers (Kitano, 1982), which can be seen as negative by some adults.

Wofle (1990, in Pardeck & Murphy (Eds.)) similarly warns of asynchrony. Children develop in different areas at different rates, and this is often more noticeable in younger children and can cause their advanced abilities to be overlooked. This is what is referred to as asynchronous development, when some areas or abilities develop faster than others. Asynchronous, or uneven, development can lead young gifted children, who are, after all, still young children, to become frustrated or produce unanticipated emotional outbursts. Koshy & Robinson (2006) explain that the reactions can result from differences in reasoning ability across domains (for example, higher reading skills than math skills that allow a student to read a word problem, but not solve it) and developmental differences between mental age and ability to control their emotions, causing them to sometimes appear to act older or younger than they are. These children are often aware of their own differences, which can cause aggravation if they are able to think about or imagine something but can't actually do it (Koshy & Robinson, 2006). Koshy & Robinson (2006) go on to explain that if things are not all well in the child's environment, they might choose to engage in "easy" tasks while avoiding those in which they can't be sure of expertise.

### **Identifying the Gifted Preschooler**

Identifying young gifted children is generally thought to be too difficult, a notion that Silverman (1992) says may be due to budgetary considerations; identification means that programs must be provided to those students, and that programming could be costly. But if we are to ensure the chance for these children to develop their talents to the fullest, early

identification and intervention is crucial (Pfeiffer & Petscher, 2008). Moreover, teachers in a gifted kindergarten program reported that children who came to them from a gifted preschool program fared better than those that had not attended a gifted program (Burns, Mathews, & Mason, 1990). But while identifying young gifted children has its challenges, it is not as impossible as many may think.

Historically, identifying gifted children has been done through standardized IQ testing. The problem for preschoolers is that, beyond there being little consensus on a definition of giftedness, there are few screening instruments that are designed specifically for young gifted children that are also technically sound (Pfeiffer & Petscher, 2008). Burns, Mathews, & Mason (1990) support this, stating that there is a significant lack of standardized screening instruments for children ages 3-5. And while rating scales are available, they don't have standardized cutoff scores to differentiate between merely bright young children and those that are truly gifted; those scores are necessary for school systems to make decisions when large numbers of children are referred for screening (Burns, Mathews, & Mason, 1990). But Silverman (1992) found that many late bloomers will indeed exhibit the majority of traits in early childhood that characterize other gifted children and will shine on ability measures between the ages of 4-7 even if they don't shine in school. There are some rating scales that have been successful in identifying young gifted children. Among those are the Renzulli-Hartman Scales (1971) (Silverman, Chitwood, & Waters, 1986) and the Gifted Rating Scales- Preschool/Kindergarten Form (GRS-P) (Pfeiffer & Petscher, 2008). The GRS-P measures young children on their intellectual and academic ability, creativity, artistic talent, and motivation, and has been found to be valid in identifying gifted preschoolers against a cutoff score (Pfeiffer & Petscher, 2008).

However, Renzulli (1990, in Pardeck & Murphy (Eds.)) also notes that standardized test scores are only effective in identifying about 50% of potentially gifted children. The other 50% can be recognized through teacher nominations, “alternate pathways”- such as parent and peer nominations, creativity tests, self-nominations, and product evaluations, and special nominations that occur when all teachers look at a list of the students who have been nominated and can recommend those who may have performed well in the past or alternative settings (Renzulli, 1990, in Pardeck & Murphy (Eds.)). Additional identifications can come from notification and orientation of parents and action information nominations that take place when teachers notice that a student gets exceptionally interested about or excited in a particular topic or mode of learning (Renzulli, 1990, in Pardeck & Murphy (Eds.)). Koshy & Robinson (2006) support this, stating that “especially when we combine adults' descriptions with evidence from objective measures of development” (p. 115), like test scores, we are better able to identify gifted young children.

There has been some debate about the effectiveness of parents' and teachers' ability to recognize giftedness in preschoolers. In fact, some teachers are reticent to identify giftedness so young because they prefer to focus on socialization and play (Hector, 2013, Sankar-DeLeeuw, 1999). Nevertheless, studies have shown that both parents and teachers are able to identify giftedness in their young children relatively accurately (Pfeiffer & Petscher, 2008; Silverman, Chitwood, & Waters, 1986). Hector (2013) notes that teachers' limited knowledge of identification and testing of giftedness is not because they are unmotivated, but merely because they lack the training and information that teachers of older students are provided

with. Teachers of young children are rarely presented with opportunities to learn about giftedness, and may not understand how to identify them or how important it is to do so.

Those who do understand the need for early identification also know that family involvement in the identification process is of the utmost importance (Wolfe, 1990, in Pardeck & Murphy (Eds.)). When parents are able to identify giftedness in their children early, and are supported through professional testing, this leads to appropriate early intervention (Silverman, Chitwood, & Waters, 1986). Parent identification methods can reduce the number of late bloomers that are overlooked by gathering information about the child outside the school setting (Silverman, 1992), where asynchrony and negative traits may affect their behavior, and parents have been shown to be 66.6% accurate in identifying their children's giftedness when provided with a framework of characteristics to use in evaluation (Silverman, Chitwood, & Waters, 1986). Koshy & Robinson (2006) explain that parents are particularly successful in identification when asked to describe their children's behavior instead of judging whether the child merely is or is not gifted. And when parents' observations of their children's behavior are verified with concrete lists of characteristics, they are more confident in seeking professional, formal assessment and appropriate programming (Silverman, Chitwood, & Waters, 1986).

Burns, Mathews, & Mason (1990) suggest a plan of identification for young gifted children that combines both formal, standardized data and informal methods. Their method includes public education on giftedness in preschoolers through media, screening packets for families and teachers who think they have a gifted preschooler that ask about specific traits and behaviors, individual child screening using the Hess School Readiness Scale, and formal

identification using several valid and reliable standardized tests as well as a parent interview. Burns, Mathews, & Mason (1990) stress that the initial screening process through parent or teacher packets is very important in order to weed out any children who aren't gifted so that less time is wasted in formal evaluation. It is clear that their approach combines various methods of identification that allows for a more comprehensive picture of how gifted preschoolers function in various environments: at school, home, and in testing (Burns, Mathews, & Mason, 1990).

### **Programming for the Gifted Preschooler**

When considering what programming is best for educating young gifted children, one must remember that, as discussed above, their giftedness is not always a complete package. Asynchronous development and the uniqueness of each child call for programs, and sometimes special services in or out of the regular classroom, that can be flexible and highly individualized so as to develop their skills and attend to their uneven development (Cukierkorn, Karnes, Manning, Houston, & Besnoy, 2007, Kitano, 1989, Walker, Hafenstein & Crow-Enslow, 1999).

Much of the literature about meeting the gifted preschooler's educational needs is repetitive. Cukierkorn, Karnes, Manning, Houston, & Besnoy (2007), Kitano (1982, 1989), and Walker, Hafenstein, & Crow-Enslow (1999) all stress the need for process learning that produces original products, the need for opportunities to enhance creativity and creative thinking through open-ended questions, chances for problem solving, and practice of higher-level thinking skills. Kitano (1982) suggests promoting higher-level thinking through enhancing executive operations by allowing young gifted children to forecast, plan, make decisions, and communicate their thinking to others. These authors also agree that special attention must be

paid to the gifted preschooler's affective development rather than just cognitive development, and the best way to do this is through play that allows students to build a foundation of social skills that will carry them through later years. Cukierkorn, Karnes, Manning, Houston, & Besnoy (2007) note that the Reggio-Emilia approach to learning is based in many of these principals and can be especially beneficial for young gifted children, as can basing the curriculum on the children's interests. This allows them to take responsibility for their learning and ensure continued growth throughout their schooling (Cukierkorn, Karnes, Manning, Houston, & Besnoy, 2007). Finally, Kitano (1982) states that allowing young gifted children to experience new resources through speakers, facilities (field trips), and materials gives them the chance to extend their learning in the regular classroom environment. It is important to note that many authors (Cukierkorn, Karnes, Manning, Houston, & Besnoy, 2007, Kitano, 1982, 1989, Wolfle, 1990, in Pardeck & Murphy (Eds.)) have emphasized that young gifted children can learn equally as well in a regular classroom as in a gifted classroom, and that the suggestions for their programming can benefit non-gifted preschoolers as well.

Another facet of education for gifted preschoolers that much of the literature focuses on is the importance of parents and teachers in supporting these young children. In fact, Cukierkorn, Karnes, Manning, Houston, & Besnoy (2007) affirm that "there is nothing more important than parental involvement in the development of young children's gifts" (p. 275). Kitano (1989) likewise stresses the importance of the teacher's role in identifying and supporting gifted preschoolers: teachers should actively look for strengths, recognize negative behaviors, and partner with parents to get a complete picture of the child's abilities and limitations. To guarantee that young gifted children are developing their talents to the fullest, it

is essential to develop a partnership between families, educators, and other caregivers (Cukierkorn, Karnes, Manning, Houston, & Besnoy, 2007). Some authors (Cukierkorn, Karnes, Manning, Houston, & Besnoy, 2007, Wolfle, 1990, in Pardeck & Murphy (Eds.)) highlight the importance of teacher education, asserting that staff must be well trained and have access to high quality, on-going professional development that deals specifically with the needs of gifted preschoolers. Wolfle (1990, in Pardeck & Murphy (Eds.)) states that, beyond being well trained, preschool professionals must also be well paid.

### **Conclusion**

It is clear from the literature that parents and teachers of preschoolers play an integral role in the identification and education of young gifted children, and that they are at least reasonably reliable identifiers of giftedness when they know what to look for. But it is also clear that young gifted children can display a broad and sometimes eclectic range of characteristics that can make giftedness difficult to recognize, especially for those unfamiliar with giftedness. Being familiar with these traits and having access to materials such as checklists can make this job much easier for parents and teachers, but this does not seem to be a widespread state of affairs.

The literature is steadfastly silent on what background knowledge parents and teachers have about how giftedness can manifest in their young charges, which makes it difficult to know how and by whom these children are actually being identified and served. Consequently, there is little real knowledge within the gifted community about how many gifted young children are being overlooked and are underachieving or whose talents are being squandered because of this. As Karnes & Johnson (1991) state, "These children represent one of our most

precious resources. In these times when society is being placed under increased pressures, we cannot afford to waste human resources” (p. 281).

Understanding what parents and teachers know (or don't know) about giftedness can help remedy this problem by bringing awareness to the situation and developing means to educate the nurturers of this often-neglected population of learners.

### **Research Questions**

The literature shows a significant lack of information focused on what parents and teachers of young children know about the manifestation of giftedness in this population. By surveying parents and teachers of preschoolers, this research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What background knowledge do parents of preschoolers have about how giftedness manifests in young children?
2. What background knowledge do teachers of preschoolers have about how giftedness manifests in young children and are there any relationships to the teacher's education or training?

### **Methodology**

In order to best answer the above questions, this research study used online survey software that was dispersed through an internal company email list within the author's sample population of preschool teachers and parents within the Northern Virginia area. This method of data collection provided easy access to a broad and diverse audience within the target population of teachers and parents.

### **Participants**

The participants of this research were preschool teachers and parents that work at or attend one of a selection of private preschools, within the company that the author currently teaches for, for ease of contact, in the Northern Virginia area. The 35 participants ranged in age from 21 to 62 years old, with a mean of 39 years of age, and were 74% white, 5.7% mixed race, 5.7% African American, and 2.8% Asian. Four respondents chose not to report their race. The teachers and parents all currently teach 3-5-year-olds or have a 3-5-year-old enrolled in one of these schools. To recruit participants for this study, an email that contains the description and purpose of the study as well as the informed consent form with the survey link was sent to each of 15 schools' director or principal asking them to disseminate the survey to their teachers and parents within the age group, as suggested by Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun (2019).

Once participants clicked on the link to the survey, they were given an informed consent notice, including an explanation of how giftedness is defined for the context of this study. The informed consent information (see Appendix A) included the title and purpose of the survey, any potential risks or benefits, explanation of data confidentiality, and the date that the survey was closed down. Participants must have given their informed consent on this page, otherwise they were exited from the survey. At the end of the consent notice, participants were required to click an "Agree" button in order to respond to the survey questions. After participants complete the survey, they were thanked for their participation. Incomplete surveys may still contain usable information and were kept in the data pool for review.

### **Data Collection**

The survey was created through Qualtrics, a website that allows responses to be collected anonymously, organizes them into easily evaluated formats, and ensures security

through a number of measures, including password protection on the server storing any data collected (Qualtrics Core XM, 2020).

Once questions were written, a pilot test was conducted with one parent and teacher within the author's own school to check for clarity, understanding, and clarity of answer choices (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2019). These responses did not count for survey results. Following IRB approval, an email (see Appendix D) with a link to the online survey was sent to the administrators in the author's private preschool system to be distributed to teachers and parents willing to participate in this study. The survey remained open for a two-week period. Two follow-up emails were sent to administrators after one week and during the middle of the second week to remind teachers and parents to complete the survey. When the survey was completed, the data was analyzed with descriptive statistics as well as content analysis for open-ended questions.

Data collected included descriptive information about respondents' knowledge of young gifted children, including their ability to accurately identify gifted characteristics and their feelings about identifying giftedness in young children (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2019), their ability to recognize a gifted individual in a given scenario, as well as qualitative data from three open ended questions regarding the respondent's history with gifted individuals and thoughts about educating gifted preschoolers. Due to the survey being online it was low cost and provided ease of data analysis available through the survey provider. Results were formulated around descriptive statistics and content analysis. This method of analysis was descriptive in nature and looked at counts and percentages, the central tendencies, and variation of the data (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2019). Content analysis was done through a coding frame generated

in Excel, which was created with categories gleaned from the literature (Schreier, 2014).

Though response rates to online surveys are generally considered the poorest of all survey methods, a large enough population was chosen to ensure a sufficient sample size (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2019).

The first part of the survey required respondents to enter demographic data such as age, race, gender, level of education, current age of child(ren) for parents or current age group taught for teachers, and number of years taught for teachers. The format of these questions varied to include multiple choice and yes/no questions. Using closed-ended questions allows for easy scoring, more reliability, and the collection of standardized data since all respondents are given the same options (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2019). This demographic data will determine parental or teacher role and status as it relates to their ability to recognize and understand giftedness in preschoolers.

Following this information, the survey included questions that address the research question about the respondent's knowledge of the traits of giftedness in preschoolers. Comparative rating scale questions using Likert category scales were used, which ask respondents to choose a response category on a psychometric scale to show their opinion, attitude, or belief on a certain issue, in this case giftedness in young children (Nemoto & Beglar, 2014). Respondents were presented with both positive and negative traits of young gifted children, which were taken from the review of the literature, and asked to rate on a 4-point Likert scale, with no neutral option available, how likely they think a gifted preschooler is to demonstrate this trait. The use of a 4-point scale with no neutral category was used in order to make the survey easier for respondents with low motivation to complete and to ensure more

statistical accuracy (Nemoto & Beglar, 2014). This section also included traits of typical preschoolers as well as traits that do not apply to preschoolers.

In the next section, respondents were asked to rate how strongly they agree that preschoolers can be gifted, how important they feel early identification is for gifted preschoolers, and their feelings on how often giftedness is exhibited in young children. Two scenarios were included at the end of this section describing the characteristics and behaviors of a child and asking respondents to rate the likelihood that the child is gifted.

Finally, three open ended questions were asked: have respondents had previous experience with young gifted children and to describe these experiences, and what steps they would take to educate a young gifted child in the regular classroom. Including these open-ended questions will allow for a more complete picture of respondents' knowledge (Nemoto & Beglar, 2014).

### **Data Analysis**

When the two-week survey period was completed and all data was obtained, the data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and content analysis to determine any areas of significance and any relationships or associations between specific questions and themes. When looking at the demographic data comparisons with prior literature were made to provide insight into the relationship between the number of years a teacher has been teaching, teacher level of education, or parent level of education and their understanding of giftedness in young children.

For questions about characteristics of gifted preschoolers, the researcher looked for trends concerning which characteristics parents and teachers feel most strongly signify giftedness and whether those traits truly are representative of gifted preschoolers as identified in prior research. Data was also analyzed for patterns relating to the perception of traits (positive or negative), and whether parents and teachers rate those traits in significantly different ways. These results were then compared to the literature about the effectiveness of parents and teachers in identifying giftedness in young children. In addition, relationships between respondents' views on identification of giftedness, the next section, and their ability to recognize traits were studied. For example, someone who strongly disagrees that giftedness can or should be identified in preschoolers would be expected to rate many of the characteristics of giftedness as very low. Does the data support this theory?

The first open-ended question helped to determine any responses that might skew the data. If a parent or teacher has or has taught a gifted child that has already been identified, they are likely to be more familiar with gifted traits and could cause bias within the data. The final two open-ended questions were analyzed for any key ideas and accommodations that were identified in the literature as being helpful in identifying gifted preschoolers and educating them in the regular classroom. This was done through the use of a coding frame with the categories of identification, individualized instruction, and school-home partnership. Responses to this last question were applied to the coding framework thematically, that is, looking at the overall theme of a segment of material to determine where it fit in the framework (Schreier, 2014). The entirety of the framework was then looked at to determine areas of significance. Relationships between identification of traits and recognition of

giftedness were explored, as well as any connections to instructional methods that are identified as beneficial in the literature. The author also looked for trends in the occurrence of home and school relationships and how they relate to the parent or teacher's idea of success for a gifted preschooler.

## **Results**

### **Demographic Data**

Respondents were primarily parents, with 28 out of 32 (87.5%) affirmative responses, while 4 of the 32 respondents were preschool teachers (12.5%). A small portion (15.6%) of respondents were both preschool teachers and the parent of a preschooler. Respondents were also primarily female (75.76%) as opposed to male (24.24%). 75.75% of survey respondents had either a 4 year degree or Master's degree, while 15.15% had a 2 year degree, 6.06% had some college, and 3.03% were high school graduates. Occupations provided a good mix of experiences and backgrounds, with everything from teachers, electrical engineers, stay at home parents, government employees, healthcare workers, accountants, and media relations. Of the nine teachers that responded to this survey, a third had had more than 10 years of teaching experience. The remaining respondents had been teaching for 6-10 years (11.11%) or 0-5 years (22.22%).

### **Traits**

Results for parent and teacher feelings about traits are displayed in Table 2. Not all respondents chose to answer all questions, so total responses vary from 28-29 out of the total 35 participants. Those traits marked with an asterisk are typical of young gifted children.

In looking at traits that are typical of giftedness, many respondents agreed that these traits do indeed indicate giftedness. Early reading ability had 100% of respondents either agree or strongly agree that this was likely to show giftedness, while self-motivation, highly curious, and constant questioning of others received 96.55% strongly agree or agree responses. In-depth, specific interests received 89.66% agree or strongly agree responses. 79.32% of respondents feel that gifted individuals have a preference for new experiences. A significant portion of respondents (68.96%) believe that young gifted individuals are emotionally sensitive, while 67.85% of respondents agree or strongly agree that gifted individuals adapt easily to new situations.

While looking at traits that are not typical of young gifted children, 65.51% of respondents felt that young gifted individuals would be prone to repeating phrases or words, while only 27.59% believed that young gifted children would be unorganized. 64.29% of respondents felt that young gifted individuals would have a preference for certain activities or materials. Only 21.43% of respondents felt that a short attention span could indicate giftedness, while no respondents thought that gifted individuals would have difficulty working independently.

Table 2

How likely do you feel the following traits are to indicate giftedness in young children aged 3-5 years?

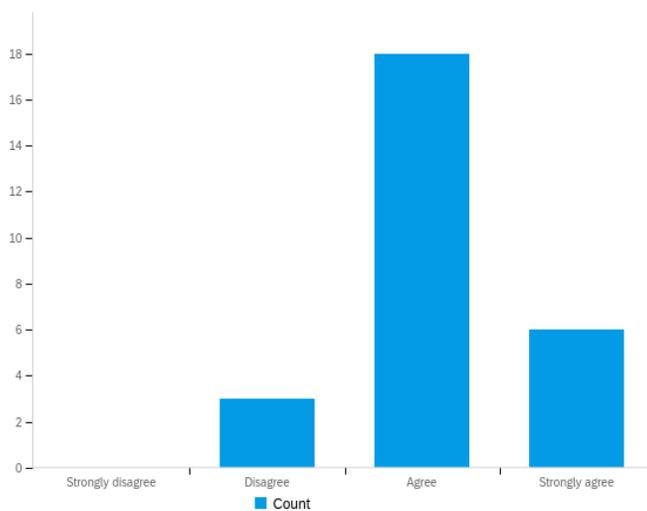
Trait	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Repetition of phrases or words	10.34% (3)	55.17% (16)	24.48% (10)	<b>0% (0)</b>
*Disinterest in group tasks or activities	3.45% (1)	20.69% (6)	75.86% (22)	<b>0% (0)</b>
*Early reading ability	44.83% (13)	55.17% (16)	<b>0% (0)</b>	<b>0% (0)</b>
*Self-motivation	55.17% (16)	41.38% (12)	3.45% (1)	<b>0% (0)</b>
*Difficulty sitting still	<b>0% (0)</b>	34.48% (10)	65.53% (19)	<b>0% (0)</b>
*Difficult relationships with peers	6.90% (2)	27.59% (8)	62.07% (18)	3.45% (1)
*Chooses to play or work by themselves	6.90% (2)	55.17% (16)	37.93% (11)	<b>0% (0)</b>
*Makes friends easily	3.45% (1)	41.38% (12)	55.17% (16)	<b>0% (0)</b>
Unorganized	0% (0)	27.59% (8)	68.97% (20)	3.45% (1)
*Difficulty falling or staying asleep	3.45% (1)	31.03% (9)	65.52% (19)	<b>0% (0)</b>
*Perfectionism	10.34% (3)	48.28% (14)	37.93% (11)	3.45% (1)
*Highly curious	55.17% (16)	41.38% (12)	3.45% (1)	<b>0% (0)</b>
*Emotionally sensitive	17.24% (5)	51.72% (15)	31.03% (9)	<b>0% (0)</b>
*In-depth, specific interests in which they have a lot of knowledge	27.59% (8)	62.07% (18)	6.90% (2)	3.45% (1)
*Preference for new experiences	20.69% (6)	58.63% (17)	20.69% (6)	<b>0% (0)</b>
Preference for certain activities or materials	14.29% (4)	50.00% (14)	35.71% (10)	<b>0% (0)</b>
*Constant questioning of others	42.86% (12)	53.57% (15)	3.57% (1)	<b>0% (0)</b>
*Easily adapts to new situations	10.71% (3)	57.14% (16)	32.14% (9)	<b>0% (0)</b>
Short attention span	<b>0% (0)</b>	21.43% (6)	71.43% (20)	7.14% (2)
Difficulty working independently	<b>0% (0)</b>	<b>0% (0)</b>	92.86% (26)	7.14% (2)

### Identification of Giftedness in Young Children

The majority of respondents (88.89%) hold the opinion that giftedness **can be** identified in children as young as 3 (Graph 1). Alternatively, just 70% of respondents feel that giftedness **should be** identified in young children (Graph 2). These results, while slightly above, closely match those of Sankar-DeLeeuw’s (1999) survey of parents and teachers of already identified young gifted children.

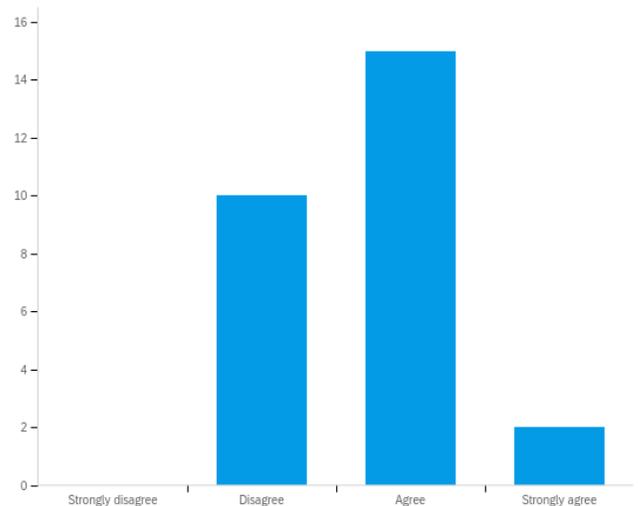
Graph 1

Do you believe that giftedness **can** be identified between the ages of 3 ½ and 5 years old?



Graph 2

Do you believe that giftedness **should** be identified between the ages of 3 ½ and 5 years old?



When it came to identifying a child as gifted or not given a scenario, the results (Tables 3 and 4) were more complicated. Two-thirds of respondents felt that Joey was not gifted based on the traits described. Respondents felt that Cassie, who shows more “stereotypical” or

“positive” gifted behaviors, was more likely to be gifted, with 88.88% agree or strongly agree responses.

**Table 3**

Joey is a student in a four-year-old classroom. He loves to talk about dinosaurs and can describe each dinosaur and its diet accurately, but sometimes his dinosaur talk interrupts other lessons in the classroom and he can't always finish his work because he's so busy talking about them. He can name any dinosaur you ask him about and his favorite place to visit is the Museum of Natural History so that he can look at the dinosaur bones. He tries to draw all of his dinosaurs, but often ends up yelling, crying, and ripping up his paper because his pictures don't look like the ones in his dinosaur books. How would you rate the likelihood that Joey is gifted?

#	Field	Choice Count
1	Strongly disagree	0.00% 0
2	Disagree	66.67% 18
3	Agree	33.33% 9
4	Strongly agree	0.00% 0
		27

Showing rows 1 - 5 of 5

**Table 4**

Cassie is a five-year old student in a pre-k classroom. She is curious and highly motivated to learn, with a particular interest in animals and their environments. She has remarkable language skills and she is beginning to independently read and write. Cassie spends a lot of time finding out about animals, asking questions and having her parents read to her from books and do research for her on the internet. She then creates books, dictating to her parents what she wants to write, and then copying what they have written. She also does drawings to illustrate her books. Her teachers are encouraging, but they also want Cassie to participate age-appropriate activities that their classroom offers. Cassie now tells her mother that she doesn't want to go to school. How would you rate the likelihood that Cassie is gifted?

#	Field	Choice Count
1	Strongly disagree	0.00% 0
2	Disagree	11.11% 3
3	Agree	44.44% 12
4	Strongly agree	44.44% 12
		27

Showing rows 1 - 5 of 5

## Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative analysis showed that 23.8% of respondents had had previous experience either teaching or parenting a gifted child, with only one at the 3-5-year-old age, though that child was never formally evaluated as far as the respondent knew. Those respondents reported

that they had learned from these experiences that giftedness is a mixed bag, with one respondent saying that “giftedness presents itself in different ways in different children. I have had students who are gifted in the special education classroom, general education classroom, and students who are ELLs and also gifted.”

When asked what steps they would take to ensure that their gifted child or student received an appropriate education, a significant number of respondents stated that they felt a partnership between home and school would be an important first step, with respondents stating “I would ask his/her teacher for their opinion”; “I’d work closely with their teacher”; and “working with the teacher and principal”. Many respondents also noted the importance of individualized instruction, though not always in those terms. Often parents framed their responses as looking into “extracurricular activities” or “enrichment programs” available for their child’s specific interests. Surprisingly, only a small number of respondents mentioned formal evaluation of their child’s gifts, which seems at odds with the percentage of respondents that believe giftedness can be identified in young children.

### **Discussion**

Responses regarding individual traits, either of giftedness or not, were very interesting. Those traits that are traditionally associated with giftedness (early reading ability, self-motivation, highly curious, asking a lot of questions, having specific interests, and enjoying new experiences) received overwhelming agree or strongly agree responses. We might call these traits “positive” or “stereotypical” traits, because they are what we generally think of when confronted with the subject of giftedness. Based on this survey, it seems that parents and

teachers can readily identify these traits in their charges, a finding that is consistent with the literature (Pfeiffer & Petscher, 2008; Silverman, Chitwood, & Waters, 1986).

In contrast, some of the less stereotypical traits received much less support from parents and teachers. Only 44.83% of respondents felt that young gifted children would make friends easily and 58.62% felt that young gifted children would be perfectionists. Respondents also felt that emotional sensitivity and adapting easily to new situations were less likely to indicate giftedness (68.96% and 67.85% respectively). However, the literature tells us that all of these traits can be indicative of giftedness in a young child (Kettler & Bower, 2017; Kitano, 1982, 1989, 1990; Koshy & Robinson, 2006; Hodge & Kemp, 2000). It seems that once we begin to move away from the conventional traits of giftedness, parent's and teacher's ability to identify giftedness becomes less accurate.

Furthermore, traits included in the survey that are often seen as "negative", because they are undesirable behaviors or those that are more difficult to deal with, received the lowest agree and strongly agree responses. Just 34% of respondents felt that young gifted children would have difficulty sitting still, might have difficult relationships with their peers, and have difficulty falling or staying asleep. 62.07% of respondents felt that young gifted children would prefer to work by themselves, while just 24.14% of respondents felt that a young gifted child would be disinterested in group tasks or activities. While these traits can signify giftedness, they are often overlooked because they are so contrary to what is typically seen as giftedness (Kitano, 1989; Kitano, 1990, in Pardeck & Murphy (Eds.)). This survey supports that idea; as

traits of giftedness move farther away from what is stereotypically portrayed, parents and teachers are less and less sure of the presence of giftedness.

We can see support for this idea in the responses to the two scenarios given. Both children in those scenarios were gifted and exhibited gifted characteristics. However, Joey, in scenario 1 (Table 3), showed more “negative” traits, as well as asynchrony, or having uneven development between different abilities (his ability to know everything about dinosaurs, but his inability to draw them realistically). A full two-thirds of respondents did not feel that Joey would be gifted. As often happens, Joey’s asynchrony and “negative” traits masked his giftedness (Kitano, 1989; Kitano, 1990, in Pardeck & Murphy (Eds.); Koshy & Robinson, 2006, Wolfle, 1990, in Pardeck & Murphy (Eds.)).

In contrast, scenario 2 (Table 4) shows a stereotypically gifted girl, Cassie, who is highly motivated, an early reader, and shows a specific interest. 88.88% of respondents agree that Cassie is likely gifted. This may be due to the presentation of her traits- ones that we generally associate with intellectual giftedness, and not disguised by asynchrony or “negative” traits like those shown by Joey. While the literature indicates that both parents and teachers are relatively accurate in identifying giftedness in young children (Pfeiffer & Petscher, 2008; Silverman, Chitwood, & Waters, 1986), the author of this study is not ready to confirm that. The results of this study suggest that parents and teachers may be able to identify some traits in isolation, particularly those traits that are conventionally portrayed in intellectual giftedness, but lack the knowledge to see beyond those traits to the full picture of a young child’s talents.

Of note is the percentage of respondents that felt that some traits not common to gifted individuals could signify giftedness. 65.51% of respondents felt that repetition of words or phrases, a common trait in autism spectrum disorders, called echolalia, could show giftedness. Similarly, 64.29% of respondents felt that gifted children would have a preference for certain activities or materials. Both of these traits received more strongly agree or agree responses than all of the “negative” traits, further supporting the idea that parents and teachers are at a loss when it comes to traits that are not those of a model gifted child.

Respondents were asked if they had ever had previous experience with giftedness, either with their own child, student, or family and friends. A small number of parents had older children who had been evaluated for gifted programs and two parents who were also teachers had had experience teaching older gifted individuals. One of the things they noted about their experiences with these children was that not all of them were gifted in the same way or exhibited the same traits in the same ways. One respondent, who had experience teaching gifted students as well as had a gifted son, stated that “given [my son] had a speech delay I hadn’t considered that he would be gifted”. This is a perfect example of how asynchronous development can mask giftedness, as well as gives credence to the notion that giftedness does not look the same in every child. Young gifted children are still children; giftedness does not negate a disability, delay, or behavior typical of young children, nor do any of these things negate giftedness. As the literature constantly reminds us, we must remember to look at the whole child, taking all of their characteristics into account, over many, varied observations and interactions so as to get a full and accurate picture (Gross, 1999; Koshy & Robinson, 2006; Renzulli, 1990, in Pardeck & Murphy (Eds.); Silverman, 1992; Wolfle, 1990).

None of the preschool teachers who responded said they had or have ever had a student who was identified as gifted, though some suspected that the traits they observed, such as asking high level questions, independence, and early reading and writing ability, would later lead to gifted identification. Why, then, did these teachers not follow up on their suspicions? Often, as Hoctor (2013) notes, it is merely because preschool teachers lack the training and information that teachers of older students are provided with in regards to identification and testing of young gifted children. Simply, they didn't know how to go about the evaluation process, or even if they should at the preschool level.

The final open-ended question asked about the steps a parent or teacher would take if they suspected their child or student was gifted. The literature tells us that formal identification, individualized instruction, and a strong school-home partnership are all vital to the success of the young gifted child. Surprisingly, just five respondents stated that they would seek formal evaluation. This may be due to a lack of knowledge on gifted resources available for young children; as one respondent stated, "I don't know what steps could be taken". Many respondents mentioned getting their child involved in extracurricular activities or programs that might cater to their child's talents: "Look into other programs/activities to get them involved in"; "Enroll them in music/art classes if they show talent or interest"; "Look to invest in outside programs"; "Private lessons in areas of interest". This further signifies that parents and teachers of young children don't know that formal evaluation and programs are a reality for preschoolers.

A greater number of respondents discuss the importance of individualized instruction, though often in terms of private lessons or extracurricular activities as mentioned above. It seems that parents and teachers understand the need for gifted children to have instruction appropriate to their level and interest, but once again, they don't know how this would occur in a preschool program.

One of the most important factors in the success of young gifted children is a strong home-school partnership, and it seems that parents and teachers intuitively know this. Half of the respondents discussed this in their responses, which is a heartening result. Many, in fact, stated that as their first step upon suspecting their child or student is gifted, they would talk with teachers, directors, principals, or parents to confirm. This response is promising, as we know from the literature that parental involvement is vital to the development of a young child's gifted (Cukierkorn, Karnes, Manning, Houston, & Besnoy, 2007). Being dedicated to building school-home partnerships helps to create a more complete picture of a child's abilities and limitations (Kitano, 1989), as well as helping to develop that child's talents to the fullest (Cukierkorn, Karnes, Manning, Houston, & Besnoy, 2007). Involving parents in identification can also reduce the number of young gifted children who are overlooked (Silverman, 1992).

Of particular note are the responses that seemed at a loss for where to even begin. They talked about not knowing what would constitute giftedness and about not having access to information or literature that could help them to make an informed decision. As many of the responses across this survey have indicated, preschool teachers and parents generally know what is best for their charges and want that for them. However, it seems that they are lacking

in vital information that will help them give their charges the best possible early childhood education, especially when it comes to manifestations of giftedness that are not what is typically portrayed in the world at large. Parents and teachers of preschoolers need tools to help them become aware of the myriad ways that giftedness can manifest in young children. Silverman, Chitwood, & Waters (1986) tell us that parents are more effective in identifying giftedness in their children when they are able to use a checklist of characteristics, and even more likely to seek evaluation when they can verify what they are seeing with checklists of traits. Yet, this type of resource is not available in most preschools, and preschool teachers are often left high and dry when it comes to giftedness; trainings and professional developments rarely, if ever, touch on this topic. Sankar-DeLeeuw (1999) found that even parents of identified young gifted children require more resources: they expressed a need for resources to challenge their child, information on how to discipline, educational options, and parenting guidelines. It is clear that we are doing our youngest learners a disservice by not offering some simple materials to ensure that parents and teachers are educated on giftedness in young children and possess the resources to educate and cultivate their child's talents.

### **Implications**

Based on the results of this survey, parents and teachers seem to be quite good at recognizing giftedness in its most stereotypical expression. However, based on analysis of "negative" traits of giftedness in young children and open-ended responses from parents and teachers, they have a much more difficult time identifying giftedness when those traits are presented in the child in negative ways or when asynchrony is present. Furthermore, parents

and teachers seem to know instinctively what their children and students would need should they be gifted, but are unsure of how to go about it. Further research is needed to confirm and support these results. Further research may also be warranted on how teacher and parent background knowledge would change given specific literature to aid in identification. More research will be needed to look into the training preschool teachers receive in the area of giftedness, including what training, if any, is received, how often it is offered, and the content of trainings.

### **Limitations**

The sample size for this study was relatively small and consisted of primarily white, well-educated individuals, which could have affected results. Limited responses may have been due to low enrollment or other factors related to COVID-19 restrictions and anxieties. Respondents were also residents of areas local to the author's home, specifically the Northern Virginia area. This limited living area may also have affected results, as this is an area known to be somewhat more affluent and likely to have parents and teachers with higher levels of education and the ability to be involved in their child's education to a higher degree.

### **Conclusion**

As advancements in our society continue to place pressure on individuals to create, innovate, and think outside the box for new solutions to the world's problems, we cannot overlook the importance that gifted individuals will play in these roles. In order for gifted children to reach their full potential as gifted adults who can contribute their best resources to humanity, it will be more important than ever to identify and attend to talents as early as

possible. While the literature has shown that it is, indeed, possible to recognize giftedness in young children, and that parents and teachers are able to do this with support, this study has discovered that parents and teachers lack the skills and understanding to identify giftedness when it presents in non-stereotypical ways, this is, when traits are expressed in “negative” ways or asynchrony masks traits altogether. Parents and teachers seem to hold a narrow view of giftedness, and, in order to make a true difference in the identification and education of young gifted children, they must first have the resources to broaden their conception of what giftedness in young children looks like. In order for parents and teacher to feel empowered to seek out support, they need to first feel qualified to recognize the traits that suggest giftedness. Parents and teachers will also need to feel capable in what steps they need to take in order to get services for their young children, and while this study shows that many parents and teachers instinctively know how to ensure their charges get an appropriate education, they do not know what resources are available to the gifted community nor how to make use of them. Providing parents and teachers with information on giftedness in young children in the preschool setting is an easy step to implement to begin to right this problem. By ensuring that young gifted learners are no longer neglected, we may create a brighter future for all.

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## Appendix A

### Giftedness in Young Children: What Do Parents and Teachers Know?

#### ADULT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

##### Brief Description

The purpose of this research is to investigate the knowledge parents and teachers of preschoolers have of giftedness in young children, including their ability to recognize gifted characteristics in their children or students. Individuals who volunteer to participate in this study will answer relevant survey questions. The survey is anonymous and it will take about 8-13 minutes of your time. There are few, if any risks to participants in this study. There are no direct benefits or rewards for participants in this study. **Please read the remainder of this form before deciding if you want to volunteer to be in this research study.**

My name is Katie Goodman and I am a graduate student at the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, Virginia, and I am seeking your consent to participate in this research study. Involvement in the study is voluntary, so you may choose to participate or not. The information below explains the study in detail. Before volunteering, please ask any questions that you may have about the research; I will be happy to explain anything in greater detail.

##### Details of Participant Involvement

I am interested in learning more about giftedness in preschoolers, and what knowledge parents and teachers have about giftedness. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to answer multiple-choice, ranking, category scale (agree/disagree) style questions, and open response questions. Questions will also include demographic data about your role as either a parent, teacher, or both; and will also ask about employment status, care status of the children,

number of children in the home, etc. Questions regarding views on giftedness will be formatted to specific audiences of parents and/or guardians.

### **Privacy and Confidentiality**

All information about participants is entirely anonymous. This means that your name or other identifying information will not appear in any data collected or in any reports of this research, and neither I nor anyone else will know your identity or be able to associate you with your data. When the research is complete, I will destroy all participant data and delete the survey account.

### **Risks and Benefits of Participation**

The risks to you for participating in this study are minimal. The only foreseeable risk to participants in this survey is possible discomfort in answering survey questions about your personal opinions and experiences online. However, you do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. If you should experience any adverse effects from taking the survey, please contact me immediately so that I may take appropriate action. The benefit of this research is that it may contribute to better general understanding of parental and teacher perspectives regarding giftedness in preschool. It may also provide greater insight into how giftedness in preschool can be better identified and how teachers and parents can be supported in this. There are no direct benefits to you as a participant.

### **Participant Rights**

This research has been approved by the University of Mary Washington Institutional Review Board, a committee responsible for ensuring that the safety and rights of research participants are protected. For information about your rights as a research participant, contact the IRB chair, Dr. Rosalyn Cooperman at [rcooperm@umw.edu](mailto:rcooperm@umw.edu). You have the right to **ask any questions**

**you have** before, during or after participation, and I encourage you to do so. As a voluntary participant in this research, you have the right to refuse to answer any questions that I ask of you. If you do not want to be in this study, there will be no penalties or loss of benefits that you are entitled to. If you volunteer to be in this study and later change your mind, you have the right to withdraw. You may withdraw by exiting out of the survey webpage, and no data about you will be included in my study. You may also withdraw by emailing Katie Goodman at kgoodma2@mail.umw.edu and your data will be removed from the study.

### **Contact Information**

For more information about this research before, during or after your participation, please contact me, Katie Goodman, at kgoodma2@mail.umw.edu or my university supervisor, Dr. Nancy Guth at nguth2@umw.edu. To report any unanticipated problems relating to the research that you experience during or following your participation, contact my university supervisor, Dr. Nancy Guth at nguth2@umw.edu.

### **To be Completed by Participant**

I have read all of the information on this form, and all of my questions and concerns about the research described above have been addressed. I choose, voluntarily, to participate in this research project. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

*Select option:*

- I grant my consent (Check this box to continue)
- I DO NOT grant my consent (Check this box to close the survey website; no information about you will be provided to the researchers)

*If respondents select "No," the survey will be terminated using Qualtrics' skip logic technology.*

*If respondents select "Yes," they will move ahead to Q2.*

**Appendix B****Giftedness in Young Children: What Do Parents and Teachers Know?  
Survey Questions**Section 1: Demographic Data

(The following questions will vary in format between multiple choice and yes/no responses)

Age

Race

Gender

Highest level of education

Occupation

Teacher or Parent of preschooler

(Teacher only) How many years taught? Current age group teaching

(Parent only) Current age of child(ren) enrolled in preschool

Section 2: Traits of Giftedness

(All of the following traits scored on a 4-point Likert scale)

How likely do you feel the following traits are to indicate giftedness in young children?

1. Repetition of phrases or words
2. Disinterest in group tasks
3. Early reading ability
4. Self-motivation
5. Difficulty sitting still
6. Difficult relationships with peers
7. Chooses to play or work by themselves
8. Makes friends easily
9. Unorganized
10. Difficulty falling or staying asleep
11. Perfectionism
12. Highly curious
13. Emotional sensitivity
14. In-depth, specific interests in which they have a lot of knowledge
15. Preference for new experiences
16. Preference for certain activities or materials
17. Constantly questioning others
18. Easily adapts to new situations
19. Short attention span

20. Cannot work independently

### Section 3: Beliefs on Giftedness in Young Children

(The following questions rated on a 4-point Likert scale)

1. Do you believe that giftedness **can** be identified between the ages of 3 ½ and 5 years old? (Sankar-DeLeeuw, 1999)
2. Do you believe that giftedness **should** be identified between the ages of 3 ½ and 5 years old? (Sankar-DeLeeuw, 1999)
3. Joey is a student in a four-year-old classroom. He loves to talk about dinosaurs and can describe each dinosaur and its diet accurately, but sometimes his dinosaur talk interrupts other lessons in the classroom and he can't always finish his work because he's so busy talking about them. He can name any dinosaur you ask him about and his favorite place to visit is the Museum of Natural History so that he can look at the dinosaur bones. He tries to draw all of his dinosaurs, but often ends up yelling, crying, and ripping up his paper because his pictures don't look like the ones in his dinosaur books. How would you rate the likelihood that Joey is gifted?

### Section 4: Experience With Giftedness

(The following questions are open-ended response)

1. Have you had previous experience with young gifted children? If so, please describe your relationship to that child and describe your experiences.
2. (Teachers only) Have you ever had a child in your preschool class that you suspected was gifted? What are some of the characteristics that led you to make this observation? (Sankar-DeLeeuw, 1999)
3. Suppose you have a child in your classroom, or if you are a parent, your own child, that you believe to be gifted. What steps would you take to ensure they get an appropriate education?

## Appendix C

### Permission to Reprint

Email, June 30, 2020

Good evening Dr. Sankar-DeLeeuw,

I am currently writing my research proposal for my M. Ed at the University of Mary Washington on the background knowledge that parents and teachers hold about giftedness in young children. I plan to conduct a survey of parents and teachers and would like to include some of the questions you used in your dissertation survey, particularly the first three on the surveys (Do you believe that giftedness can be identified...; Do you believe that giftedness should be identified...; Have you ever had a child...) . Do I have your permission to include these questions as part of my research— with full credit given to you?

Thank you in advance!

Katie Goodman

Email, July 1, 2020

Good afternoon Ms. Goodman,

I am so honoured and humbled that you reached out to me. Thank you!

Yes, please use my survey questions. You have my permission. Who is your thesis supervisor?

Hard to believe, my PhD was completed 21 years ago (!!!). I would be interested in learning of your research design, findings, conclusions, and implications. Share whenever you have opportunity. I know how busy the lives of graduate students are, that you would like to complete this graduate degree as efficiently (and quickly!) as possible, and appreciate you have much ahead of you.

I hope you will be able to give some thought to publishing your research. I had great enjoyment presenting my research internationally, and publishing articles on the three papers that were a part of my PhD dissertation.

You have my contact information, please reach out anytime.

Best wishes to you on the completion of your M.Ed.

Enjoy the journey!

Naomi

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## Appendix D

### Email to Participants

Subject: Survey of Parents and Teachers on Understanding of Giftedness

Dear parents and teachers,

My name is Katie Goodman and I am a graduate student at the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, Virginia. I am currently conducting my final research by surveying parents and teachers about what they know about giftedness in young children. I could use your help to participate in this survey. Your responses to this survey will provide important information about giftedness in young children that will help me to make suggestions on how to make gifted identification a priority in the early years.

I am also a kindergarten teacher at the Merit School of Garrisonville, so naturally I wanted to reach out to our family of schools when it came time to choose participants for this survey.

The survey is brief and will only take 8-13 minutes of your time to complete. Please click the link below to go to the survey website. This survey is available until (insert date 2 weeks after email)

(Link will be inserted once live)

Your participation in this study is voluntary, so you may choose to participate or not. All responses are completely confidential and anonymous; no personally identifiable information will appear in any data or reports on that data. Once the research is complete, all participant data will be destroyed and the survey will be deleted from the website. The UMW Institutional Review Board has approved this survey. Should you have any comments or questions, please feel free to contact me at [kgoodma2@mail.umw.edu](mailto:kgoodma2@mail.umw.edu).

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation. Your participation in this survey is greatly appreciated, and your feedback is important to the education of our youngest learners.

Thank you,

Katie Goodman