

Building Bridges Between General Practitioners and Educators of the Gifted: A Study of Collaboration

Jeanne H. Purecell
University of Connecticut

Jann H. Leppien
University of Great Falls

ABSTRACT

The Collaboration Research Study examined the incidence of collaboration, as well as the assumptions of those who entered collaborative alliances. Collaboration was defined as "dialogue and planning between professionals in which the goal is to provide differentiated services for high achieving students." Two hundred and eighty-nine enrichment specialists, classroom teachers, and administrators, selected purposefully, took part in this national, descriptive, ex post facto research. The response rate from the three groups was 61%, 55%, and 51%, respectively. Results indicate that more than 80% of those sampled engage in collaboration. Data suggest that classroom teachers and enrichment specialists enter the collaborative relationship with different, and sometimes conflicting, sets of assumptions about the skills and attitudes of their collaborative partners. These empirical findings suggest that collaboration is a complex, interpersonal process. Implications of the study are twofold. First, collaboration depends upon highly developed interpersonal skills. Second, successful collaborative relationships rest upon the match between the assumptions that each party holds about the other. In order to ensure collaborative alliances that can produce high quality, differentiated learning options, the assumptions of each party need to be understood and, if necessary, bridges need to be built when gaps exist between the assumptions and the actual skills and attitudes of collaborative partners.

The investigation explained in this article is based upon three research findings and several unanswered questions. The first research finding is that the roles and responsibilities of those who educate students are changing (Donaldson, 1993; Fullan, 1992; Holcomb, 1993; Monson & Monson, 1993). Teaming, collegiality, site-based management, and collaboration are words

that describe some of the new roles for educators, and these words are heard in teachers' rooms and board of

PUTTING THE RESEARCH TO USE

The data from this study indicate that classroom teachers and general practitioners enter collaborative alliances with a common goal: to provide high quality, differentiated learning activities for all students. While collaborative partners undertake alliances with the same goal in mind, the research reported here suggests that collaborative partners embark upon alliances with different, yet complementary, sets of expectations about the competencies and attitudes of their partner. These results can be used by classroom teachers and enrichment specialists to deepen our understanding about the interpersonal dynamics upon which collaborative alliances are built and, thereby, help to ensure the success of these vital alliances for all students who require modified and differentiated curricula and instruction. Enrichment specialists can use the data to provide support services in the areas mentioned by classroom teachers and to create alliances with classroom teachers to adapt existing curricula for students needing differentiated learning opportunities. The results can also be used by school administrators who seek to enhance the capacity of school personnel to deliver high quality services to young people. Through sustained inservice about the nature of collaboration and the interpersonal skills required to facilitate such educational partnerships, administrators may be able to increase the effectiveness of instruction for all students, including those with high abilities. Finally, these results can be used by researchers to investigate, more fully, the extent of collaborative alliances in our nation's schools, the conditions under which these alliances flourish, and the benefits of the alliances, as perceived by practitioners, administrators, students, and parents.

education meetings, and are written about in educational journals and books. Practitioners at all levels are taking on new roles and forming new kinds of relationships to improve the academic performance of America's youth.

This investigation is also based upon the research finding that systems for delivering services to high achieving students are changing (Debus & Shoemaker, 1993, Purcell, 1995; Renzulli, 1994, Schack, 1996). Purcell reported that pull-out programs for high achieving students in a large proportion of states were being eliminated and reduced. As a result, high achieving students returned to the regular classroom in large numbers. Debus and Shoemaker addressed the role of the teacher of the gifted within the context of educational reform in Oregon. They predicted that the job of the teacher of the gifted would move away from providing direct services to students to providing more direct services to classroom teachers. Like Debus and Shoemaker, Renzulli also concludes that the role of the enrichment specialist is changing. He calls the reconfigured role of the enrichment specialist the "three-fifths solution" (p. 254). Under this new plan, specialists may spend 60% of their time providing direct services to students and 40% of their time providing resource services to classroom teachers. Schack discusses how enrichment specialists can assist teachers in implementing reforms in ways that maximize the promise and minimize the problems of those reforms for gifted students.

Fueled by changes in roles and changes in the delivery system of services for high achieving students, classroom teachers and many in the field of gifted education call increasingly for collaboration between general practitioners and those who educate the academically able (Council for Exceptional Children, 1994; Dettmer, 1993; Hanninen, 1994; Tomlinson, Coleman, Allan, Udall, & Landrum, 1996; Treffinger, 1991; Van Tassel-Baska, 1991). Tomlinson et al. recently reported the results of a national study in which they examined the beliefs of educators and parents regarding the need for linkages between general and gifted education. They concluded that "broad consensus" existed about the "merit and urgency" (Tomlinson et al., p. 171) for collaboration between the two fields of education.

In spite of reform initiatives based upon new roles and relationships for educators, changes in delivery systems for high achieving students, and increasing support and calls for collaboration between classroom teachers and teachers of the gifted, no systematic

research exists that examines the nature of these collaborative alliances. The purpose of this research was to investigate two questions: "What events triggered collaboration among classroom teachers and enrichment specialists?" and "What are the assumptions of each party as he or she enters collaborative alliances to deliver differentiated learning opportunities to high achieving young people?"

Method

Qualitative procedures were used to examine the data in this *ex post facto*, descriptive research study.

Sampling Procedure

Purposeful sampling was used to collect data about the scope and nature of successful collaborative practices. An initial pool of 173 graduates from a three-year degree program in gifted education was selected for participation in the research. The targeted graduates from the University of Connecticut had completed a graduate degree within the last four years and the majority of graduates were employed as enrichment specialists within their respective schools or school districts. The most recent graduates were selected because researchers believed they would be the ones most likely to be employed in enrichment specialist positions.

To ensure the highest possible response rate, procedures in a meta-analysis of factors which positively influenced response rates (Fox, Crask, & Kim, 1988) were followed. Accordingly, notification letters preceded the mailing of the Collaboration Survey. Additionally, surveys were printed on colored stationery and transmittal letters were printed on letterhead. A follow-up to non-respondents was mailed approximately two weeks after the mailing of the first survey. Finally, phone calls were made to non-respondents to the second mailing approximately two weeks after the mailing of the second survey.

To triangulate data from graduates, two additional sources of data were collected using snowball sampling procedures (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Snowball sampling is a naturalistic sampling process which is utilized to achieve maximum sampling variation. The first respondent is the gatekeeper to successive respondents who are queried to extend the information already obtained. Thus, in the notification letter for this research, respondents were asked to identify a classroom teacher and administrator in their school or dis-

trict willing to complete a parallel form of the Collaboration Survey. Respondents for the Collaboration Research Study consisted of triads of educators from the same schools/districts: enrichment specialists, classroom teachers, and administrators. Data from the triads were not matched; rather, data were matched by respondent group, that is, enrichment specialist, classroom teacher, and administrator.

Instrumentation

A five-part survey was developed for this study. Part I contained questions related to demographics including questions about the respondent's training in gifted education, number of professional staff members within the school, and number of years experience with collaboration, defined as "dialogue and planning between professionals in which the goal is to provide differentiated services for high achieving students." Part II contained open- and close-ended questions designed to obtain information about the origin of collaboration. The third part, related to the nature of collaboration—such as the topics discussed during collaboration—contained nine open- and close-ended questions. Part IV, the most lengthy section of the questionnaire, concerned the continuing use of collaboration. Examples of questions in this section include: "What interpersonal skills have you seen demonstrated by those most successful at collaboration?" and "What skills are most needed by classroom teachers/teachers of the gifted to ensure successful collaboration?" The last part of the survey contained questions related to the outcomes of collaboration.

Data Coding and Analysis

Qualitative procedures were used to analyze the data in this study. Three different types of coding were used to analyze the data from the open-ended responses provided by the different groups of respondents in this study: open, axial, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Open coding, the initial form of coding, involved unrestricted analyses of data. All open-ended survey responses were reproduced verbatim in type, color coded by respondent (i.e., enrichment specialists' responses were reproduced on blue paper, classroom teachers' responses were reproduced on yellow paper, and administrators' data were reproduced on green paper), and then separated by respondent and question number. Then, each typed response was analyzed for blocks of data—words, phrases, clauses, and sentences. These blocks or "chunks" of

verbatim data were then cut into single units. Frequently, several chunks of data occurred within one written response.

Axial coding, the next phase of analysis, involved the iterative comparing and contrasting of chunks of coded data, by respondent, in order to establish clusters of data. These data clusters or patterns acted to pull the seemingly disparate chunks of data into meaningful categories or units. In order to construct these categories, the typed data chunks for each question, by respondent, were placed on blank pieces of paper. Single chunks were compared and contrasted with initial categories that emerged quickly. As all data were examined in turn, new categories emerged because data chunks did not fit into the existing category structures.

In this way, loose families of categorized data for each respondent group were formed which shared critical attributes. Each family of data was then named by asking the questions: "What are these data chunks an instance of?" and "To what more general class do these data chunks belong?" The grouping and naming of the data into more abstract, conceptual categories helped researchers make connections between categories and subcategories of data. Categories of data were then pasted onto the blank pieces of paper. Finally, all coded pages were arranged by research question and respondent.

In the final phase of data analysis, selective coding, loose families of data were refined, and core categories of data were selected. Core categories were determined by the researchers to be the central phenomenon around which all subcategories were integrated.

Results

Response Rate and Extent of Collaboration

The response rate for the survey varied by population samples. Sixty-one percent ($n = 105$) of the enrichment specialists returned the survey. Fifty-five percent ($n = 95$) of classroom teachers responded, as did 51% ($n = 88$) of the administrators. Although the three populations sampled varied slightly, all groups indicated that collaboration was practiced extensively to service the educational needs of high achieving students. Eighty-two percent of the enrichment specialists indicated that collaboration was utilized to personalize curricula for these students, 80% of classroom teachers reported that they used collaboration, and 88% of administrators perceived that this strategy was used by

practitioners to meet the learning needs of young people.

What person, event, or set of circumstances "triggered" collaboration? Data reveal that people and events triggered collaboration (see Table 1). First, all respondent groups reported that collaboration had been teacher driven and arose, in large part, from teachers' perceptions that high achieving students'

Figure 1

Perceptions, by Group, of the People and Events That Triggered Collaboration

| Respondent | People | Events |
|------------------------|--|---|
| Enrichment Specialists | Practitioners' perceptions that high achieving students had unmet learning needs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents' concerns about their children's unchallenging academic program • Diminished funding for gifted and talented programs • Site visits to other places • Dissatisfaction with the current system to deliver quality services to high achieving young people |
| Classroom Teachers | Practitioners' perceptions that high achieving students had unmet learning needs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implications arising from pull-out programs • Poor SAT scores • The time involved with developing IEPs |
| Administrators | Practitioners' perceptions that high achieving students had unmet learning needs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The move toward inclusion • Inservice training • Parental pressure • Increasing student participation in other high level programs • Board of Education concerns about the need for challenging curricula and instruction |

needs were not being met in classrooms. Second, the teacher of the gifted or the enrichment specialist played a major role in initiating the collaborative process. Finally, respondents also observed that collaborative efforts were fueled by "outside pressures."

Who triggered collaboration?: Enrichment Specialists and Classroom Teachers. Enrichment specialists and classroom practitioners reported that teachers, either in groups or individually, triggered the process. "Teaming lead to discussion about individual students," "the closeness of the entire staff resulted in group discussions about student needs," and "a committee of elementary teachers got together to talk about students." Individual teachers were also reported to have triggered collaboration. "One teacher began splitting her class to have the advanced students together to meet their needs." "[A pair of teachers] traded kids for certain activities to increase the challenge level for them." One enrichment specialist reported that she observed a teacher share the student of a former colleague with another teacher who had a small group of high achieving students.

Who triggered collaboration?: Administrators. Administrators echoed the data reported by classroom teachers and enrichment specialists regarding the triggering mechanism for collaboration. "[It] emerged from a sense of professional sharing," "teacher teams working together," "concerns from teachers," "teacher inquiry," "just a willingness to work together," and "mutual interest" typify the comments reported by this group of respondents.

Mutual Interest: Enrichment Specialists, Classroom Teachers and Administrators. The "mutual interest" that was reported by classroom teachers, enrichment specialists, and administrators was the recognition that high achieving students' learning needs were not being met in the classroom. Enrichment specialists reported that "Students were not challenged, especially in the area of math," "students needed a differentiated curriculum," "student need," and "kids even told me that they knew the stuff in their books." Classroom practitioners commented, "Some of my students displayed great skills in math, communication, problem solving, art, and music," "[Some of my students] needed more stimulation in the classroom," "[I saw] boredom, as well as no motivation displayed by some of my students," and "students with high abilities wanted to know more than the typical topics covered in the classroom." Administrators, too, reported that the unmet needs of gifted students was the mutual interest of practitioners:

"[They see] children whose academic needs are not being met in the classroom," "teachers realize that gifted students' needs are not met in the heterogeneous classroom," and "we realize we need to improve instruction for bright students."

Enrichment specialists were key people in the development of the collaborative process. Seventy percent of enrichment teachers reported they had initiated the collaborative process. Sixty-seven percent of classroom teachers identified the enrichment specialist as the one who had initiated collaboration. Similarly, 69% of administrators identified the enrichment specialist as the person who had "led the way" toward collaborative planning for students with high abilities. Classroom teachers made many unsolicited written comments that elaborated on the role of the enrichment specialist: "Our enrichment coordinator held meetings with us to let us know what services were available," "Our teacher of the gifted met with the primary teachers and taught us how to compact curricula," and "I made end-of-the-year math tests with our TAG teacher and began a program for my gifted math students."

The unmet needs of high achieving students were not the only catalysts for collaboration among practitioners. Outside pressure was another category that emerged from the data related to this research question. Each group of respondents reported different outside pressures that fueled the move toward collaboration.

Outside forces: Enrichment specialists. Enrichment specialists reported the following outside pressures: parents' concerns about their children's academic program, diminished funding for gifted and talented programs, site visits to other places, and dissatisfaction with the current system to deliver quality services to high achieving young people. Most of the data reported by enrichment specialists focused on parental pressures. "Parental pressure" and "parental complaints about boredom" were the most frequently cited outside pressures that encouraged collaboration.

Outside forces: Classroom teachers. Classroom teachers reported a different list of outside pressures that heightened the need for collaboration, including: the implications arising from pull-out programs, poor SAT scores, and the time involved with developing IEPs. The most frequently cited outside pressure from this group of respondents was "concern about missing skills and class work while at the gifted program."

Outside forces: Administrators. Administrators indicated that outside pressures included the move toward inclusion, inservice training, parental pressure

to provide more quality services for high achieving students, increasing student participation in other high level programs (e.g., Invention Convention, Math Olympiad), and board of education concerns.

What are the assumptions of collaborative partners as they enter alliances to deliver differentiated learning opportunities to high achieving young people?

Separate survey questions for enrichment specialists and classroom teachers were designed to elicit information about this research question. Classroom teach-

Table 2
Assumptions Held by Partners
Entering a Collaborative Alliance

| Respondent | Skills | Attitudes |
|---|--|---|
| Classroom teachers expected enrichment specialists/ teachers of the gifted to be: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resourceful - Knowledge-about curricula, instruction, assessment and curricular materials - Able to understand the tacit knowledge related to schools and schooling - Can problem solve; be creative • Able to communicate effectively orally and in writing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible • Willing to give of his/her time • Tolerant • Respectful • Patient |
| Enrichment specialists/ teachers of the gifted expected classroom teachers to be: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to perceive and diagnose differences among students • Able to adapt and monitor curriculum for individual students | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respectful of individual differences among students • Willing to try new ideas • Excited about learning • Positive about collaboration |

ers were asked to respond to the following: What skills/attitudes/dispositions do you believe are most required of enrichment specialists to ensure successful collaboration with classroom practitioners? Likewise, enrichment specialists were asked this question: What skills/attitudes/dispositions do you believe are most required of classroom teachers to ensure successful collaboration with teachers of the gifted?

Respondents indicated that skills and attitudes of participants contributed most to the success of collaboration. Classroom teachers assumed that enrichment specialists would possess certain skills and attitudes as they entered the collaborative relationship. Likewise, enrichment specialists assumed classroom teachers would possess certain skills and attitudes. Data from classroom teachers will be presented first, followed by the results collected from enrichment specialists. The findings are also illustrated in Table 2.

Classroom teachers

Classroom teachers expected enrichment specialists to possess two important skills: resourcefulness and the ability to communicate. Classroom teachers defined resourcefulness in terms of several factors. First, they expected specialists to be knowledgeable about curricular materials. They also expected enrichment specialists to have a broad knowledge base of experience and wisdom related to teaching and learning and to keep them informed about important curricular issues related to high achieving young people. Second, they expected specialists to understand tacit knowledge related to schooling, specifically the classroom and the school schedule. Classroom teachers indicated they needed a specialist who "understood the goals of the classroom teacher," who understood "all the difficulties [encountered by teachers] in the classroom," and who was "aware of the pressures and schedules" of the classroom practitioner. Third, they expected specialists to be problem solvers and creative. They expected specialists to be able to provide them with "new" ideas for teaching, provide them with "concrete examples of materials or resources to use," help them "find solutions" to problems with high achieving learners, "come up with many options for teaching young people," and be able to "find answers quickly."

Classroom teachers expected enrichment specialists to be able to communicate consistently and effectively. They wanted specialists to provide "ongoing communication about student progress," and "insightful information about the student to all classroom teachers" with whom the student worked. Classroom teachers

expected specialists to be able to communicate effectively, "to possess the verbal skills [needed] to give teachers directions about where they [the classroom teachers] were going." Furthermore, classroom teachers expected specialists to have the communication skills necessary to be "respected by other teachers."

In addition to expecting specialists to have a set of skills, classroom teachers expected specialists to demonstrate a disposition characterized by flexibility, a willingness to give of his or her time, tolerance, and supportiveness. Teachers expected specialists to be adaptable to any classroom situation and demonstrate a willingness to adjust to "any teaching or learning style." Not only did classroom teachers expect specialists to give of their time, but they also expected that specialists would provide teachers with time "to assimilate new things." Classroom teachers repeatedly stated that they needed specialists who would be tolerant "of ignorance (on my part)," who could perceive a teacher's "strengths and stretch gently," and who "would use a teacher's strengths to develop a plan of action." Classroom teachers were wary of specialists who demonstrated "attitudes that they were better than classroom teachers." They reported that they needed a specialist who: was "respectful of other people's turf and personal limitations," possessed "keen observational powers," "was analytical, but not judgmental," "was encouraging," "provided praise," and "provided support for independent learning."

Enrichment Specialists

Like their counterparts, enrichment specialists also held expectations about the skills and attitudes of classroom teachers. Data from the specialists indicated that their expectations regarding hoped-for skills and attitudes differed from those held by classroom teachers. With respect to skills, specialists expected that teachers would know how to be flexible and that they would have the ability to "adapt," "monitor," and "adjust" curricula and instruction. Specifically, the data suggest that specialists expected classroom teachers to be able to modify learning activities based upon the needs of the students.

In addition to having the skill to adapt and monitor the curriculum, specialists also expected classroom teachers to have certain dispositions about the teaching and learning process, including an understanding of the needs of all students, a willingness to try new ideas, an excitement for learning, and a collaborative spirit. They hoped teachers would have "an authentic concern for each child" and an "understanding and appre-

ciation for the differences among children." Toward that end, they hoped classroom teachers would "empathize with bright children" and have a "desire to challenge bright, quick learners," even if it meant placing bright children outside the classroom for periods of time. Specialists hoped that classroom teachers would recognize the need to let go of some children, and be able to "share the students for the year with the school, the specialist, and community."

Specialists expected classroom teachers to enter the collaborative relationship with an open mind, that they would be willing "to try new ideas," such as "pre-assessment" and "subject acceleration." The data also indicate that specialists hoped teachers would be willing to change "teaching styles" to accommodate learners who learned best with simulations or peer tutoring, for example. Specialists hoped teachers would be risk-takers, and willing to "break out of traditional ways of doing things."

Specialists hoped that classroom teachers would be excited about learning. They hoped classroom teachers would be "filled with curiosity" and a desire to "create." Furthermore, they assumed that teachers would have an "interest in learning about themselves," and "desire to grow professionally."

They also hoped classroom teachers would enter the collaborative relationship with a "cooperative attitude" and a "deep sense of responsibility." They wanted classroom teachers to demonstrate "a willingness to work hard," and be willing "to put in the extra time and effort to meet." Finally, they hoped classroom teachers would be "tolerant" and "patient," and give the new collaborative relationship the "time it needed to develop and succeed."

Discussion

This study includes two major findings which have implications for those involved with graduate-level training programs, preservice programs, and staff development. These findings and implications are explained below.

Extent of Collaboration

The first finding is that collaboration between classroom practitioners and enrichment specialists or teachers of the gifted is being practiced successfully in some schools across the country. This is encouraging news in light of the fact that many educators from all levels have called urgently for collaboration among gen-

eral and gifted education. Data from this research also suggest that educators of the gifted frequently initiated the partnership. It is satisfying to know that some in gifted education realize how important it is to risk "taking the first step." There are, of course, limitations to these data. The sample is small and all respondents attended the same graduate-level program in gifted education where the role of the enrichment specialist was emphasized. Accordingly, collaboration may not be as common as indicated in this study because gifted education specialists may not have received the prerequisite training to initiate and sustain educational partnerships.

Expectations of Collaborative Partners

The heart of the research, however, is the second major finding: the expectations that collaborators from general education and gifted education hold for one another. The finding is compelling for two reasons. First, it underscores the importance of the interpersonal dynamics of the collaborative process. Collaboration is, first and foremost, about people and the skills they bring to the relationship. Second, the finding pinpoints the expectations that enrichment specialists and classroom teachers hold for one another as they enter the collaborative alliance. These expectations or assumptions have, heretofore, not been explicit. Knowing the different, yet seemingly complementary sets of expectations that collaborative partners hold for each other, we can now build important bridges to increase the likelihood of successful collaboration.

Building bridges: Resourcefulness. How do we, in gifted education, build such bridges? By extracting and carefully examining the meaning of each skill and attitude the general practitioners in this research believed was necessary for effective collaboration and then identifying ways to enhance our aptitude related to the identified skill or attitude. For example, the overwhelming majority of classroom teachers in this research expected teachers of the gifted to be resourceful. Data from this research study indicate that resourceful means a variety of different things, including: having a broad knowledge base of experience and wisdom related to teaching and learning, being able to come up with many options for teaching gifted students, and being able to locate answers quickly. How, then, do we nurture our resourcefulness? Answers include, but are not limited to: joining professional organizations related to education, reading content area journals; volunteering to serve on curriculum

review committees, reading gifted education journals, spending time reading at children's book stores, copying and sharing noteworthy articles with colleagues, sharing materials freely, writing mini-grants to send classroom teachers to professional development opportunities, networking with other practitioners including those at the university level and state departments of education, attending conferences and bringing back materials, developing a lending library, talking with professionals in other areas to learn about representative topics related to content area studies, reading newspapers and news magazines, and responding to requests from classroom teachers as quickly as possible.

Building bridges: Demonstrating effective communication skills. How can we nurture our communication skills to ensure that we communicate "consistently" and "effectively" so that "we are respected by other teachers?" The literature from special education is replete with information about effective communication. Friend and Cook (1992) elaborate about the characteristics of effective verbal feedback. It is descriptive, rather than evaluative; specific, rather than general; directed toward a situation over which the teacher can change; concise; and checked to ensure clear communication (pp. 94-97). With respect to nonverbal communication, Friend and Cook ask collaborators to be mindful of different body movements, vocal cues, spatial relations, and the use of encouragers (pp.73-75). Salend (1994) defines the characteristics of effective team members. Among other skills, individual team members "listen without interrupting, consider the perspective of others, avoid making judgments, reflect upon a speaker's message, expand ideas of others, take notes, wait before speaking, refrain from anger, and use humor" (p. 120). As enrichment specialists, it is important to note that it is not the job of the classroom teacher to listen to us. It is our job to find a way to communicate effectively so that classroom teachers will want to listen to what we have to offer.

Building bridges: Demonstrating understanding. What can teachers of the gifted do to meet the expectations general practitioners hold about attitudes required for successful collaboration? For example, how can we ensure that we are perceived as understanding? Among other things, we can listen; be keenly observant; be patient; provide modeling or offer to co-teach, if necessary; avoid being judgmental; use praise and encouragement; and acknowledge the schedules and pressures of the classroom teacher.

Building bridges: Checking our own perceptions. So far, we have looked at how we can build bridges between classroom practitioners' assumptions and the skills and attitudes we, as enrichment specialists, possess. This analysis represents only half of the story, however. It is essential to look at the assumptions we, as enrichment specialists, hold for classroom teachers. Are our assumptions about their skills and attitudes consistent with the skills and attitudes they actually possess and hold? Our research indicates that we expect classroom teachers to be able to diagnose individual learning differences among children and then be able to adapt and monitor learning activities to meet their needs. Quite simply, our expectations regarding their skills may be too high (Tomlinson et al., 1994). In light of the increasing diversity among students in today's classroom, teachers face enormous pressures and demands.

Nor can we expect teachers to have the attitudes we expect of them. The research in this article indicates that we expect classroom teachers to "be filled with curiosity," possess "a desire to create," "be interested in learning about themselves," "have a desire to grow professionally," "be cooperative," have a "deep sense of responsibility," "be willing to work hard," and "put in the extra time and effort." Fullan (1997) reports, "Anyone who spends time in public schools can feel the growing and deepening malaise among educators, whether it stems from a sense on the part of teachers that the public and the government do not care about them, or from an overwhelming sense of despair that the problems are insurmountable and worsening. ... For large numbers of the teaching profession, the pressure of the job has taken the joy out of teaching" (pp. 217-218). To summarize, the research presented here suggests that we, as teachers of the gifted, may unwittingly hold romantic notions that may increase the gap between classroom practitioners and teachers of the gifted and may even create more alienation and cynicism than heretofore has existed.

To effectively build bridges between our own expectations about the skills and attitudes of classroom teachers and their actual skills and attitudes requires a realignment on our part. We must sense deeply the enormity of problems and challenges facing classroom teachers and be willing to take on a part of their burden. To unwittingly overlook, disregard, or dismiss the realities—even paralysis—of some classroom teachers ensures the failure of collaboration and the successful delivery of differentiated learning opportunities for high achieving students. An understanding and

acknowledgment of the complexity of problems faced by teachers and the concomitant emotional side of their daily dilemmas will provide us with a much firmer ground upon which to build successful collaborative alliances.

Implications of the Research for Those in Education

Finally, this research has implications for those involved with preservice, graduate-level, and inservice programs. The results reported here suggest preservice teachers and graduate-level students need exposure to a variety of topics including the nature of teaming and collaboration; the assumptions of partners as they enter collaborative alliances; differences among students; the characteristics and needs of all learners, including those who are gifted and talented; methods and materials, K-12; the principles of differentiation; and classroom management in the differentiated classroom. Specifically, this research suggests that preservice teachers and graduate students need to understand the nature of collaborative alliances and the prerequisite skills and attitudes that support educational partnerships. Additionally, they need to practice initiating and sustaining collaborative alliances. Both groups of future teachers and specialists also need sustained exposure to course work that requires them to learn about the many types of learners in today's classrooms. Equally important, they need to spend several semesters becoming well-versed in methods and materials, K-12. Without a thorough mastery of curricular objectives, instructional strategies, and educational materials, future classroom teachers will be unable to differentiate learning activities for diverse learners. Without a thorough mastery of curriculum objectives, instructional strategies, and educational materials across all content areas, K-12, future enrichment specialists will be unable to be the "resourceful partner" that classroom teachers in this study said they desperately needed.

This research also has implications for school administrators who are responsible for implementing inservice programs for those currently practicing in the field. Put simply, our ability to deliver high quality, challenging learning opportunities for all learners, including those who are gifted and talented, rests upon our ability to form and sustain productive educational partnerships. Accordingly, public school inservice programs need to address the roles of professionals in collaborative partnerships; the expectations held by partners entering collaborative alliances; the condi-

tions (i.e., time to conduct systemwide, meaningful staff development, as well as time to practice and refine the related skills; access to professional journals and literature, the availability of supplementary materials, access to the Internet that facilitate the development of successful partnerships); and the expected outcomes of these partnerships.

Conclusion

In the early 1990s, Renzulli and Reis said, "What remains is for us as a field to take seriously the importance of collaboration with content specialists, school administrators, support personnel, and classroom teachers in new configurations that will allow the ... needs of the gifted to be taken seriously" (J. S. Renzulli & S. M. Reis, personal communication, April 20, 1991). The research contained in this article highlights two facets of the collaborative process that we must understand and practice if we want to tap into the power and benefits of collaboration to provide high level, differentiated educational services for all of our students. First, collaboration is built upon the interaction and resulting relationships between and among people. Second, collaborators who seek to design high level services for young people enter the collaborative alliance with different, yet complementary, sets of expectations. These expectations need to be understood and, if necessary, bridges must be built in order to ensure the success of these potentially powerful alliances between classroom teachers and teachers of the gifted or enrichment specialists.

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TEACHING THE CREATIVE CHILD, GRADES K-8

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The Association for the Advancement of Educational Research will sponsor the symposium *Teaching the Creative Child* November 30 to December 2, 1998 at the Marriott At Sawgrass Resort, Ponte Verda, Florida. The symposium includes 18 papers ranging from presentations of theoretical models for teaching the creative child by Dr. John Feldheusen, Dr. Jack Levin, and Dr. Mervin Lynch, to presentations of practical applications in pedagogical content areas such as reading by Dr. Joyce Robinson, music by Laura Schulkind, Poetry by Dr. Carole Ruth Harris, and presentations of approaches to teaching the creative child with disabilities by Dr. Amy Phillips, teaching the artistically creative child by Dr. Gil Clark and Dr. Enid Zimmerman, the creative Black child by Dr. Alexinia Baldwin, and to teaching the Asian-Pacific creative child by Dr. Carole Ruth Harris. Those wishing additional information on this symposium should contact Dr. Carole Ruth Harris, director, G.A.T.E.S. Research & Evaluation, 600 Main Street, Winchester, Massachusetts 01890 (781-729-4283; ; FAX 781-721-6456). Registration for this symposium may be made on the attached form and sent with payment to PROFESSOR ROBERT M. HASHWAY, vice president and director of management and finance, 113 Greenbriar Road, West Monroe, Louisiana 71291. Those attending this symposium should be eligible for Continuing Education Credits and/or Professional Development Points.